

# SPIRITUAL



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# LIFE

**Volume 6, No. 2**

**June, 1960**

## **Leisure**

**Fr. William, O.C.D.**

**Fr. Wulstan Mork, O.S.B.**

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Theme:

**Leisure**

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# Leisure

ONE of the greatest blessings of our modern technology, our American economic system, our productivity is the new leisure they have given our people. Golden hours of one's own have been added to each day, days to each week, years to each lifetime.

But the ironic, even tragic, part of this boon to good living is that few have learned how to use this new leisure. The average American is uneasy even when he tries to relax. The qualities that were indispensable in creating our standard of living become a formidable handicap when he seeks to enjoy his hard-won leisure.

## Man's Indisposition for Leisure

Communication, with which the modern man is obsessed, kills the art of *communion* by which man is enriched and ennobled. Communication starts by being an aid, a convenience. It grows, grows, grows — like a tree if you like it, like a cancer if you don't. In any case, it ends as a way of life. The transmission and reception of messages, almost irrespective of meaning, becomes an activity fascinating in itself. It can be quite satisfying — though never fulfilling — to certain temperaments that are outgoing, social, manipulative, present-minded. But it yields its last measure of satisfaction only if pushed to its last degree of development. This involves an assault on privacy or, rather, a common, unconscious willingness to be assaulted.

Boredom and ennui, a frantic search for diversion are the common reactions to an hour, or a day of quiet. The modern Cleopatra in Eliot's *Wasteland* desperately asks: "What shall I do? . . . What shall we do tomorrow? What shall we ever do?" She expresses one of contemporary man's most pathetic problems. Publishers of pornography and pap, producers of endless third-rate movies and TV programs have made their fortunes providing an answer — false but lucrative.

There is a compulsion, also, to keep on the move. What would happen to the vacation traveler if he were to linger on somewhere long enough to open the possibility of perceiving and understanding? What keeps the tourist "on the go" is emptiness and incapacity, inability to fill a pause in the day's occupation with anything worth doing: justified fear of leisure time. The radio and television industries are based on the assumption that the American people are so poor in personal resources that they must have entertainment available at the turn of a switch twenty-four hours a day.

Our lives revolve — in quiet desperation — around our work. This is killing. Inhuman is the man who is fettered to the process of work. Any man whose life is completely filled by his work shrinks inwardly and contracts, with the result that he can no longer act significantly outside his work, and perhaps can no longer even conceive of such a thing.

### *Education*

Home education is important. Enforced leisure (the child made to stay alone as a punishment) develops a distaste for aloneness that may last a lifetime. The child who whines: "I've got no one to play with," "nothing to do," must learn delight from his parent's joyous example: "I've got a whole hour, or a whole day, how wonderful." If a child sees only a bustling parent, hiding from himself in his own murky flatulence, always finding ways to while away the time or to kill it by scrabble, TV, golf, or idle, small-time chatter, the child too, will dribble away, like a leaking faucet, all of himself except the superficial.

A child favorably impressed with leisure may, indeed, reap precious fruit from even enforced solitary confinement later on. Prophets, philosophers, and saints have achieved wonders in jail. It is always a mistake for the enemies of a dynamic man to lock him up or to confine him in any way. As Pandit Nehru, who knows, said: it gives him enforced leisure to read and think — the sources of real power. The sources are valid for saints and scoundrels alike. Would it not be wiser for their enemies to leave them at large to work off their steam in a life of action than to jail them where they concentrate on manufacturing intellectual time bombs?

Humanity is seldom made to look more foolish than it makes



itself by acts of persecution. Time inevitably has the laugh on it, and a grim laugh it is. The case histories bear this out. Take Boethius: lying in prison at Pavia while awaiting execution (A.D. 524) he writes a book which makes him schoolmaster to Europe for centuries, *The Consolation of Philosophy*. Cervantes wrote *Don Quixote* in jail. John Bunyan lay in the dungeon of Bedford Gaol when he could have had his liberty at any time if he had promised to give up preaching. As a consequence, *Pilgrim's Progress* goes on preaching for hundreds of years to people of all nations, races, and religions. One of the greatest pieces of religious literature in the world was written by St. John of the Cross. Most of this was done in prison. The list of masterpieces written in jail is exceeded only by those written in exile. Mohamet flees for his life from Mecca and in desert wanderings dictates the *Koran*. Athens banishes one of her generals, Thucydides, for his failure in a expeditionary campaign; and he writes his incomparable *History*. Euripedes goes into voluntary exile in Macedonia where he writes his most poetic tragedy, the *Bacchae*. While the Florentines sought Dante to burn him alive, he wrote, in exile, the *Divine Comedy*. And on and on — right down to our own Concord, solitary, Henry David Thoreau.

So beware of the dynamic thoughtful man in exile or in jail. Jail means a stoppage of traffic. If one's normal traffic flow of ideas, two-way, pro and con, give and take, is stopped by a dead-end block of suspicion, hatred, slander, persecution, jealousy, prejudice, legalism, formalism, false witness, envy, authoritarianism, he is as effectively in jail as though locked up.

"Liberty means responsibility. That is why most men dread it." Dreading liberty, persecutors would deny it to others. And yet persecution is so terribly shortsighted. It may be a complete *immediate* success, only to destroy for centuries to come the present good or bad condition of the nation, the community, the superior that allows it to be practiced.

Our school system is partly responsible for our incapacity for leisure. *Schola* means "leisure" but all leisure has been deliberately squeezed out of school. So education has increased our will to professionalize, to specialize (even our sports and games), leaving us incurious about any intellectual or sensuous experience that a specialist cannot put to use.

In differing degrees, we are all born with the same senses and potentialities. When we who enjoyed painting in kindergarten grow up, nothing has happened to deny us the same satisfaction (though not necessarily the same excellence) that Abraham Rattner gets at an easel — nothing except that the faculty was allowed to atrophy from disuse.

As children we also enjoyed dancing and singing, but as we went on through school we learned that nothing was worth learning unless it had pragmatic value and advanced our specialization. If our schools provided leisure, we would be less specialized but more original, creative, and versatile. Fewer of us would be pros and more of us amateurs. But we would be ourselves; and we would be whole, happy, and really alive. And we would make a greater contribution to the world. St. Thomas said that it is necessary for the perfection of human society that there should be men who devote their lives to contemplation. Unfortunately most of us do not have the simple wisdom of Melanie, the little child of LaSalette, who said she didn't want to go to school because there was so much noise "and I'm afraid my heart might hear it."

The significance of the amateur is that his sport is to no end but itself. It is pursued solely for an enjoyment beyond which there is no end except excellence. However slight the excellence, however limited his capacity to refine or increase it, the amateur's reward is that he has done what he can without usefulness or practical gain.

Apart from making a living, the average specialized pro has found no zest for life. Except in relation to his job, his mind is color-blind, tone-deaf, and mute. Inborn faculties whose use would create gusto and delight have fossilized. He remains commonplace and incurious, with no passion for learning or understanding. His is the common lot of us all. No wonder we are bored — and bores. No wonder that leisure scares us.

### *Constructive Use of Leisure*

This basic indisposition for leisure is unfortunate because the basis of human perfectibility is free time. Now that we are liberated from the practical, workaday world, from the welter of ordinary,



undistinguished things, from the tangible, unrefined elements of life, from our puritan-inherited concepts of morality: *Idleness is the devil's workshop; hand work is man's salvation*, etc. — Now that we are free, are we going to fritter away our heritage reading the comics or, in some equally childish manner, wasting time?

Science has led us to the pinnacle of human possibilities but has not added a single cubit of wisdom to our lives. That is *our* inescapable responsibility. It poses, in fact, the biggest problem of modern man — perhaps even bigger than war: What to do with himself. As he ceases to be a creature of endless toil, he is liable to find himself liberated into a vacuum. His leisure time can become more of a curse than the plagues of old.

For leisure by itself does not mean progress. It need not be of itself purposeful. It does not of itself make visible new horizons or lead to deeper human fulfillment. It is as neutral as the time of day. It can set the stage for meaningless distractions, expunging and consuming man's awareness and sensitivity, thus depriving him of his uniqueness as a man.

What, then, is education asked to do? What is its biggest job in an age of leisure? The making of a new man — someone who has confidence in the limitless possibilities of his own development, someone who is not intimidated by the prospect of an open hour, someone who is aware that science may be able to make an easier world but only man can make a better one.

### Contemplation

What will save leisure from whiling away man's time and make it the most fruitful thing man has yet known? Contemplation. Leisure is not merely the interim between the acts of the working life. It is an intense activity but of a different kind. Repose — true leisure — cannot be enjoyed without some recognition of the spiritual world. For the first purpose of repose is the contemplation of the good.

"God saw all that He made and found it very good." Such contemplation of his work is natural to man, wherever he too is engaged in a creative task. We must, like a painter, take time to stand back from our work, to be still, and thus see what's what. St. Thomas Aquinas says that no man can act virtuously unless he sees what's

what. And so he needs time to contemplate. True repose is standing back to survey the activities that fill our days.

Repose allows us to contemplate the little things we do in their relation to the vast things which alone give them worth and meaning. Repose gives us time for an intensely active and creative contemplation of divine things from which we arise refreshed.

It is in leisure, genuinely understood, that man rises above the level of a thing to be used and enters the realm where he can be at home with the potentialities of his own nature; where, with no concern for doing, no ties to the immediate, the particular, and the practical, he can attend to the love of wisdom, can begin leading a truly human life.

Plato said it this way: "But the gods, taking pity on mankind, born to work, laid down the succession of recurring feasts to restore them from their fatigue . . . so that nourishing themselves in festive companionship with the gods, they should again stand upright and erect." The nature of leisure is thus basically united to contemplation, the great tradition of Western culture, and both are dependent on a real awareness of the transcendent and the divine.

### The Sunday

The soul of leisure is *celebration*. When a day is too good to be used, we celebrate it. It becomes a feast. As G. K. Chesterton said: "When man gives God a holy day, God gives man a holiday." Since God is too good to be used, we celebrate His goodness. This is divine worship, which, ultimately, is the only thing that makes leisure possible and justifiable. Divine worship means the same thing where time is concerned, as the temple where space is concerned. "Temple" means that a particular space of ground, a specific building, is withdrawn from utilitarian purposes and given over, dedicated, exclusively, to the presence and purposes of God. Similarly in divine worship, a certain definite space of time is set aside from working hours and days, a limited time, specially marked off and not used — withdrawn from all utilitarian ends.

It is in this atmosphere of worshipful leisure that man oversteps the frontiers of the everyday workaday world, not in external effort and strain, but as though lifted above it in ecstasy. That is the meaning of *sacrament*: a visible sign of a deeper, unseen reality.



A sacrament should lift man out of himself, so that he is rapt to the heavens. Let no one imagine for a moment that that is a private and romantic interpretation. The Church has pointed to the meaning of the Incarnation of the Word in the selfsame words: "that we may be rapt into love of the invisible reality through the visibility of that first and ultimate sacrament — the Incarnation."

It is, therefore, through this kind of leisure, holy repose, this kind of divine worship, of celebration of the liturgy, that man, who is "born to work," is drawn out of himself, out of the toil and moil of every day into the sphere of unending holiday; drawn out of the confined sphere of work and labor into the heart and center of creation.

Cut off from the worship of the divine, leisure becomes laziness and work inhuman. Although leisure does, indeed, embrace everything which, without being merely useful, is an essential part of a full human existence, its deepest source, by which it is fed and continues to be vital, is the celebration of divine worship.

There is one institution in the world, thank God, which forbids useful activity and servile work on particular days, and in this way prepares a sphere for a real, dignified human existence. The Church through her Mass, sacraments, and cycle of feasts, invites man to that leisure and contemplation where he can again "stand upright and erect." It provides one of the last remaining refuges from a busy, restless world.

### *Solitude*

The contemplative spirit, born and nurtured in the sacramental life of the Church, needs for its full growth copious supplies of solitude and silence, absolutely indispensable ingredients of leisure. Much more is involved than simple withdrawal from the society of men and the cessation of speech.

Solitude means being full of God, being drawn into the amiable society of the Three Persons of the Trinity; and although this means, sometimes, absolute seclusion, at other times it simply means self-possession, including the possession of God, on the busy streets and during the most crowded moments of a lifetime. But we seem to be capable of the latter only after we have resorted deliberately and frequently enough to periods of absolute aloneness.



In all ages, God has formed in solitary places the great contemplatives and the instruments of His great works. Moses goes into the desert for forty years; there God manifests Himself and makes Moses the leader of the Hebrew people. It is after walking for forty days in the desert that Elias, on the desolate mountain of Horeb, hears the gentle whisper that reveals the divine Presence. John the Baptist is drawn into the desert by the weight of the singular grace received on the day of the Visitation of our Lady. Not until the age of thirty does he leave it, filled with the spirit of God and ready to accomplish his mission as precursor. St. Paul, after his conversion, retires into Arabia; and under the direct action of the Holy Spirit, prepares for his special mission in the apostolate. Out of solitude come the great bishops of the first centuries to build our Christian civilization. Later St. Ignatius of Loyola receives, during his year of solitude at Manresa the lights that permit him to write the book of *Spiritual Exercises*, and to organize the Society of Jesus. And the Order of Carmel, which has given the Church her great mystical doctors, had its birth in the desert. There it lives, or at least it returns there incessantly for the atmosphere which can provide for its attractions and the development of its life.

And so it is in solitude that man most readily and frequently encounters God and becomes divinely empowered to be an apostle. But even from the purely natural point of view man needs solitude. Without it his natural life suffers serious vitamin deficiency. The shallowness which stultifies so much of the existence around us comes from a lack of privacy, of quiet, of solitude. Solitude is the nurse of full-grown men, and is as needful to humanity as society. The human animal consists of three living components: the body, the mind, and the soul. Each must be sustained, each must be given its food, its exercise, and its pleasures. For an individual to learn how to provide the necessities of life to his own three components is to learn the secret of *Constructive Solitude*.

To go into solitude is not to blank the mind; it is to rest it. The mind truly at rest is, as Disraeli pointed out, "the nurse of enthusiasm and enthusiasm is the true parent of genius. In all ages solitude has been called for — has been flown to."

There is a German word — *Sammlung* — for which there is no explicit single word translation in English. It means a collecting, a

marshaling of forces. It could be the label for that gathering of forces, that time of solitude and mind-rest when a great speaker, actor, or poet shuts out everything but the mood at hand.

In self-integration of this sort we are not really negating the world around us. We are rather getting ourselves and the world into focus. Out of the scrap basket of a day's small frazzlements we are putting together a time of containment and a time of strength.

Solitude, then, is as necessary for human sanctity and sanity as is human fellowship. But it is much harder to acquire. In twentieth-century living, the mind at rest — solitude — is brought by a discipline exercised by fewer and fewer people. The physical and material surroundings of the century don't encourage it. The newly designed house provides an almost automatic short circuit to contemplation. The private den has become the public TV room. The dining room is an open area. Kitchens are no longer cozy but efficient; gone is the comfortable chair which once invited a small time of reflection for mother while dinner vegetables bubbled softly on the stove. In most contemporary houses there are no hidden rooms upstairs and far away from the noise; the hustle and bustle of ordinary, leveling "togetherness." Even the doors between rooms are eliminated; and with them has gone the last slamming refuge of an outraged child and the easiest automatic means for ensuring a time of repose to "repair our nature" as Shakespeare's King Henry VIII put it.

So we must fight for solitude, for the right to be alone, to be still and know God, to be quiet and thoughtful and see things as they really are. Toward this end we must construct each day, plan it, live it; refuse to be inundated by it or dehumanized by it in any way. In the budget of hours, whether it's a lifetime or a day, there is room for whatever we want to create, but we must take the means of creativity which are at hand and work with them. Every day can have its peak and, as Goethe reminded us, "on every mountain height is rest."

## *Silence*

Besides the positive cultivation of solitude within the realm of leisure, man needs to develop interior silence: not just the cessation

in which man begins to see how worthy of reverence they really are. Serious-minded men, magnanimous men, are necessarily men of silence.

What was it that kept the Mother of God silent most of her life? There was something in her so sacred, so absorbing, magnificent, and compelling that it left no room, time, or energy for much verbiage. She was filled with the Word of God. All she could do was listen. She tells us so herself: she spent her days pondering on the meaning of the words of her divine Son. And so she was the woman wrapped in silence. She was absorbed and held captive by the power and the glory of the Word made flesh.

What happened to John the Baptist when Christ appeared on the scene? He was the last towering figure of the old world. He was a mighty defender of the rights of God, a rugged, masculine character if ever there was one. His voice was strong and relentless, crying in the wilderness: make straight the way of the Lord. And it was heard; it made a universal impression, an ineluctable one. But when Christ came, John ceased to raise his voice. He kept silence.

Why? Because John was a stouthearted man, a man apart, with a single eye. He wanted just one single joy, one unique pleasure: the incomparable joy and pleasure of hearing the voice of His Beloved. And he gave up everything else for that. He became silent in order to listen with all his might to the voice of Christ. "And no man ever spoke like this man." Even his enemies claimed this.

Why do we sometimes, on a purely natural level, find it difficult to speak? It is because we are deeply engaged; our minds are gripped; our hearts are full. It is for the same reason that we find it impossible to do two important things at once. We cannot solve intricate mathematical problems and play tennis at the same time.

When we are preoccupied with God we are bound to be silent. God invades the privacy of our souls filling our imaginations, intellects, and wills. We are compelled to be silent. So silence is not a negation. It is an absorption, a recollection; it is a Christian inwardness: being drawn deeper and deeper into the ground of the soul where we are confronted with ultimate reality, with God; it is listening with all of our might to the Word of God. God has spoken. His Word was made flesh.

We must learn to use the leisure with which we are already



blessed. And we must make a colossal, untiring effort to introduce more and more holy repose into our lives.

— FATHER WILLIAM, O.C.D.  
St. Florian's, Milwaukee, Wis.

### Suggested Readings:

1. *Leisure the Basis of Culture*, J. Pieper.
2. *The Intellectual Life*, A. D. Sertillanges, O.P.
3. *The Silent Life*, J. Merton.
4. *Gift From the Sea*, A. M. Lindberg.
5. *I Want to See God*, M. Eugene, O.C.D.

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## Recollection as the Ancients Knew It

Wulstan Mork, O.S.B.

RECOLLECTION is an element of the spiritual life on which spiritual writers tell us we must work. It's the "praying always" part of prayer. Now since any spiritual writer worth his royalties from B. O. and W., Benziger, *et al.*, will touch on the subject, if only once over lightly, one can get many concepts of recollection. And since it is a *sine qua non* of the spiritual life, it has been treated at least in passing by the masters of the various "schools" of spirituality from St. Clement of Rome on down. Hence, also a variety of views, and questions tend to arise, such as: Are the methodical moderns who would like us to "aspirate," and that preferably each quarter hour, so modern, or did the desert Fathers know the same system? Are these liturgical "cud chewers" (persons who mull over in their minds in subways and out of subways some text of the Mass or short breviary which struck them that morning) so all-fired "ancient"? etc., etc. Hence, the idea of this essay: to attempt to discover what the Church Fathers taught about recollection, those doctors of the Church of antiquity who formulated our dogmas and who antedated the multiplicity of later "schools" of spirituality.

Any essay of this sort will start with St. Clement, pope from 92 to 101. In his first epistle to the Corinthians he writes that we will be numbered among those who await God's coming "if our mind shall have been faithfully fixed on God, if we shall have diligently sought whatever is pleasing and acceptable to Him," and a few other *if's*, but the point he makes is this: recollection (which term, by the

way, the ancients didn't seem to know) is an attentiveness to God, which attentiveness is saved from mere mooning by the fact that it leads over to a diligent doing of His will.

St. Ignatius, contemporary Apostolic Father of St. Clement, has the same placid notion of recollection, but with a difference, the difference that marks everything that he wrote. St. Ignatius is to the rest of the Apostolic Fathers what St. John is to the Synoptics. One always tends to emit a "wow!" after reading even a little of him. (Dangerous reading for night silence.) Read this: "We ought so to do all things as if in Him dwelling within us. . . ." Here recollection is not only attention to God, but to Christ in whom we are as members of His mystical Body, and He living with His Father and Holy Spirit intimately within us. (The quotation is from the Epistle to the Ephesians, Chapter 2.)

Tertullian, in his *De Spectaculis* (c. 200), which was not a review of the theatrical season, far from it, tells the Christians to avoid plays and bouts because there they will not be able to think of God. His fellow apologist, Origen, will, a generation later, add a new twist. The Christian, he writes, should meditate on the law of God night and day. St. Athanasius a little more than a century later tells consecrated virgins the same thing: "Let thy work at all times be meditation on the Divine Scripture." "Night and day the word of God should be on their lips."

About the same time St. Basil the Great in his homilies on the Psalms gets back to the idea of God's presence: "Think of the all-seeing Spectator; think of Him Who is watching human affairs from above. Wherever you are, whatever you do, by night or by day, you are under the eye of God." In his extended rule he advises that "we should do all things as becomes the acts done before the eyes of God, and think all thoughts as becomes those perceived by Him." What person who is truly convinced that God is present to him can fail to do the things that please Him? No wonder St. Benedict will later call St. Basil "our holy father," for the first degree of humility of the former is nothing else but this teaching of the presence of God of the latter. Other instances of St. Basil's idea of recollection could be given, but they all say the same thing: God is present — act accordingly.

St. Basil's old friend, St. Gregory Nazianzen, speaks of monastic



customs of his day, and one of these is "meditating on the law of the Lord, day and night." So far we have two kinds of recollectors: those who are simply aware of God's presence, and those who meditate on the word of God. There is no conflict, only an addition in the latter case, for while the "awarers" may not be meditating, the "meditaters," unless they're the *wissenschaftlich* kind of exegete, should also be aware.

I suppose every priest groans when he sees St. Ambrose coming up in the lessons for Matins, for his Latin is tough. Hence, I suspect that except to people named Ambrose he's a forgotten man. But he wrote a good bit, Scripture commentaries and a sound guide for consecrated virgins, among other things. In his exposition of Psalm 118 he is particularly *ad rem* as to recollection: "Whether we eat or drink we should proclaim Christ, we should beseech Christ, we should think and speak Christ; in our heart ever, ever in our mouth should Christ be . . . even if one is not always praying he should always maintain the disposition of one praying." Where our treasure is, there is our heart; if we love Christ, we will behave like all lovers, doing the ordinary things in our life in a state of continuous blissful repose in Him; to crib one of Abbot Chapman's expressions to his devout canonesses, we will have the tap turned half-on: attentive to our work, to people, and yet, attentive in a general sort of way to Christ.

St. Augustine sees recollection as St. Basil did. "You must fear God in your public as well as private actions. You go out, you are seen; you go home, you are seen; you turn on the light (my translation), He sees you; you turn out the light, He sees you; you go into your bedroom, He sees you; you enter your inmost heart, He sees you. Fear Him . . . and in your fear, be chaste. Or, if you wish to sin, find a place where He cannot see you, and go right ahead." In a later sermon he will say, "Fear is a servant, charity is free . . . fear is the servant of charity." St. Benedict will tie these two ideas together in his chapter on humility, in which he tells the monk that the fearful remembrance of God's presence will blossom into the loving remembrance, but, nevertheless, there will always be a remembrance.

In a letter to a widow named Proba, St. Augustine describes a method of recollection popular among the Egyptian desert Fathers,

short ejaculatory prayers, by which they were able to keep stirred up their love of God. Apparently these prayers were not said continuously, because he is quite eager that Proba get the idea that this recollection of the monks is not so much a matter of words as it is of the affections. In his ninth conference, just a few years later, Cassian, that synthesizer of the spirituality of the desert, advises that we should pray frequently, but briefly. In conference ten he is more specific, giving his monks the formula, *Deus, in adiutorium meum intende; Domine, ad adjuvandum me festina*, upon which they should meditate in their in-between times. He received this formula, he says as a legacy from the primitive fathers, and it expresses all the dispositions of soul needed for prayer. "It will be for a perpetual remembrance of God." "Sleep should snatch you meditating this versicle, until, formed by its continuous usage, you can chant it in your sleep." That's a rather strenuous formation. Critics of Father Janssens' method of recollection for his religious will please take note: the method is right out of the Thebaid, not Steyl.

And so we see in these few selections from the Fathers the main types of recollection as we may know them from later writers: the practice of the presence of God, ejaculatory prayers, pondering passages of Scripture, the use of a formula. The French School will tell us to let Christ live in and through us, and thus our attention will rather be on Him and not on ourselves. But isn't this nothing else but an amplifying of St. Ignatius' "to do all things as if in Him dwelling within us," which, of course, is straight St. John and St. Paul? Christ in us, by grace, and, hence, living in us, His members. Father Caussade will teach us to live with God all day long in seeing everything that isn't sin as His will. But isn't this that fear of God that says in effect, "God is here — remember, His will"? Causade would have us go to God's presence through the outward signs of His will. The Fathers, like Scripture, conceive it as going from God's presence to His will. And, of course, God's will shall ever give Him to us.

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## Epilogue to St. Anthony

F. H. McMahon

"In reality the task of the great mystic is to effect a radical transformation of humanity by setting an example."

— Henri Bergson

HENRI QUEFFELEC'S *Saint Anthony of the Desert* was published, in translation, in 1954. Reading it, in the fall of that year, I wanted to review it, but then lacked time. That lack now seems fortunate. Since the book was adequately and favorably reviewed by several critics, and since most of what I want to say begins where the book ends, my title, therefore, is "Epilogue to St. Anthony"; and my point of departure the closing words, here quoted, of Queffelec's book:

"An apothegm records: Three monks made a habit of going to see the blessed man every year. During one of these visits, two of them questioned him about the things of the mind and the soul's salvation. The other monk was absolutely silent, asking no questions. After quite a time, Father Anthony said to him: 'You have been here so long and you have asked me nothing.' Then the third monk spoke: 'All I need is to look at you, Father.'"

"For centuries the drifting sands of the desert have been piling up to obscure Anthony's existence from the historians, but an honest striving to draw close to it will soon be rewarded by the exquisite awareness of a vivid physical presence. Out of the dark past will emerge a true and living man. The mysterious waves of his prayers are still surging across the world, and those words uttered so long ago in silence and solitude have the power even now to stir to their very depths the souls of men with ears attuned."



For me, there is a sort of whimsical grief in the thought that my words will not reach a multitude of people outside my own faith. Those within the Church need to have increased knowledge of St. Anthony; those without have still greater need, and it is of the latter group that I am primarily thinking: Protestants, Jews, Moslems, Hindus, humanists, atheists. In our Age of Confusion, millions of men with religious minds and hearts are substituting for genuine religion numerous forms of dynamic atheism. They especially become susceptible to messianic persuasions of the demonic idolatry of Communism. For these and also for professed Communists, the message of St. Anthony is especially pertinent. I have no time to write further along this line, but hope that my fellow Catholics will keep the thought in mind, as fundamental.

A biographical sketch is not within my present scope; but it should be said here that the reader of this article should read, if he has not previously done so, the *Lives* by St. Athanasius and by Queffelec—the first written in missionary spirit, the second as modern factual biography.

Before proceeding further as to the significance of St. Anthony's life, as it was fifteen centuries ago, and as it is now in heaven, we should clear away some debris. Several historians treat of Anthony with reverent intelligence. A majority, and especially those writing texts for schools and colleges, regard him with grossly ignorant contempt. Some Catholic historians, even, speak of him simply as "the founder of monasticism" and then drop him, without any indication of how he founded it, how he remains with it, and in what ways he teaches all generations the nature of Christian life. "If all men lived as Christians," said St. Ambrose, "there would be no need of monks." That thought is inherent in the life of St. Anthony, who, more than hermit, more than mystic, remains one of the greatest *apostles* in the history of Christendom.

Another obstacle to our understanding is a clinical attitude on the part of narrow specialists in psychiatry, who treat the lives of Anthony and other mystics as case histories. There is no space here for refutation of such nonsense, but those who would read a thorough refutation will find it in Henri Bergson's *Two Sources of Religion and Morality*, sufficient excerpts of which are in the fourth chapter of Maritain's *Ransoming the Time*.

More dangerous to our understanding is the world's habit of separating action and contemplation, as if they were absolutely unrelated. Anthony, Athanasius, and their successors — the great missionary bishops — made no such dichotomy. Their inner and quiet lives *invoked* the power of God; in their active lives, they, as agents, *carried* the power of God. Such is the principle by which every Christian life should be guided.

The greatest fallacy of all is that the great contemplatives merely sought escape from the world, and from the duty of serving their fellow men. "I go to pray for the Empire," said a Persian nobleman when asked by the Eastern emperor why he chose the desert. "No man goes to heaven alone," advised Thomas Merton's confessor. Such concepts of love of neighbor were thoroughly gripped by the great contemplatives, who, sometimes by prayer alone, sometimes by prayer plus action, ever strove to bring the whole world, pagan and Christian, nearer to God. That still remains the primary task of all of us.

### *Apostle in the Desert*

It is, then, the apostleship of St. Anthony that constitutes the center of my present business. To understand that apostleship, it is necessary to assess the relationship between Athanasius and Anthony — a relationship to which Queffelec and other writers have given insufficient stress.

After reading Queffelec's book, one can see that Anthony, committed to obedience, would, at any time, by command of his bishop, have come to Alexandria, worked actively there, and in all likelihood have been martyred there. On a few occasions he did come, when asked, and was freely allowed to return to the desert, where, as Athanasius fully understood, the real mission of Anthony resided. The Bishop of Alexandria was, at all times, the commander and patron of Anthony — yet, most of all, the Hermit's humble disciple.

Extension of the monastic idea to Eastern and Western Europe was the result, then, of a partnership: the prayers and teachings of Anthony in the desert; prayer and labor by Athanasius, centered in Egypt but extending to all parts of the Empire. Aside from my scope is the extension of monasticism through Asia Minor and Greece. I'll be concerned, henceforth, with one of the greatest

historical epics of all time: the extension of monasticism through the Western Empire and the permanent results of that extension. "It is my opinion," said Arnold Toynbee recently, "that Russia and the United States will co-exist in tension through the next three hundred years." Those to whom such numerals are frightening need to reflect that the conversion and civilizing regeneration of barbarian Europe took *seven hundred* years — from Anthony's prayers in the Egyptian desert, about A.D. 300, to the martyrdom of St. Adalbert in Prussia, shortly before A.D. 1000. And the end is not yet — for the contemporary flight from God to chaos makes for us new Dark Ages which must be turned again to Light.

My present concern must remain, however, with the historical Dark Ages, over which Anthony and his successors adequately triumphed, under God. The first stage of this magnificent crusade involves the missionary labors of Athanasius in transmitting to the Western world what was and is meant by the *life* of Anthony. That Bishop of Alexandria is known chiefly by his eminence as theologian, and by his triumphant war against Arianism. History barely mentions his missionary journeys to Gaul and Rome — where his chief purpose was the extension of monasticism.

### *Apostolic Exile*

One dare not assert, in given instances, the providence of God; but certainly the exilic journeys of Athanasius seem providential. His vigorously active mature life covers more than half a century. Between the years 335 and 366 — more than thirty years in total — Athanasius was in exile from Alexandria five times, to an aggregate of some sixteen years. Exiled first by Constantine the Great, he went to Trier in Gaul and spent two and one half years in that imperial and Christian center. Previous to that time he had established intimate friendships with Anthony and Pachomius and, learning well their principles and practices, had become a monk at heart. It is known that he spent most of his time at Trier in bringing home to the Western world the monastic idea. As to his methods and conversations we have no record but his tireless, dynamic energy must have had tremendous and wide-ranging effects. He returned to Alexandria in 337.

Two years later, he went into exile again, this time to Rome,



where he spent some six years (339-346), including some time in Gaul. Again, to put the matter briefly, he was carrying and explaining the spirit of Anthony, and apparently spending most of his time in diffusing the Antonian message. Nearly fifty years later, the *Vita Antonii*, written by Athanasius during his own last years, had much to do with the conversion of St. Augustine; but we must remember that the monastic idea, brought to Rome and Gaul by Athanasius and nurtured there by Jerome, Ambrose, Martin, and many others were much more foundational toward Augustine's conversion than was any one book or any series of contemporary conversations. In Augustine's time the idea was established and was already leading toward the missionary spirit, which was to reclaim and transform all Europe. Here is one of the greatest miracles of grace in human history.

To outline the reasons for the exilic periods of Athanasius is outside the scope of this article, which is concerned solely with what he did within these periods. His third exile, six years (356-362), was spent in monastic seclusion in upper Egypt in writing and in practice of monastic life. The fourth, one year (362-363), was spent again in the desert. The fifth, a few months only (364), was spent in seclusion in Alexandria. All in all, Athanasius spent nearly one third of his active life either in direct monastic practice or in promoting the monastic idea of Anthony whom both he and Pachomius regarded as founder and master. Throughout all the career of Athanasius, his inner life, which was Antonian, remained the source of his active power. The same is true of Augustine who dominated the next generation as the greatest of all Western bishops.

There is space here for only a few words about reasons for the five exilic periods of Athanasius. Constantine the Great and his immediate successors were concerned with political peace; Athanasius was fighting for the integrity of Christian faith. The emperors perceived dissension and riots over what they thought to be a mere diphthong; Athanasius and his followers knew that on the maintenance of their principle depended the whole future of Christianity, and with this view Church historians, Catholic and Protestant, remain in agreement. Each time Athanasius was recalled from exile, the recall was effected by insistent demands from his flock.

In the century after Augustine, Benedict, using Antonian and Pachomian principles, put on an enduring basis Western monasticism, which gave to Europe a succession of valiantly effective missionary bishops who, through several centuries, effected the conversion of the swarming tribes who were to make the nations of modern Europe.

Transitional, between the Western labors of Athanasius, Jerome, Ambrose, and Augustine, were the monastic foundations in Gaul of Martin, Honoratus, and Cassian. The latter, after many observing years among Eastern monasteries, published in Gaul his *Institutes* and *Conferences*, which St. Benedict was to use mightily and to command all his monks to read. The school of Martin nourished Germanus and Patrick. After Patrick, learned missionaries from Ireland brought back Christianity to northern Europe during the chaotic interim between the fall of Roman power and the full activation of the Benedictine system. These centuries were filled with saints innumerable of whom only a few can be mentioned here: Martin, Germanus, Patrick, Columba, Columbanus, Remi, Boniface, Willibrord, Ansgar, Adalbert. The Christian civilization of Europe was built not by the dynasts and warriors but by the saints.

All of these great saints knew Anthony as if he were ever present among them, acknowledged their debt, and realized especially that no truly active life is possible without the inner life of prayer and contemplation. This has been recognized not only by the missionary bishops but by the great theologians — most notably Aquinas — and by mystics such as Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, Thérèse of Lisieux.

Outside of monastic circles, the name of Anthony does not get due reverence. It was not so in the past; it must not be so in the future. Queffelec gives undue importance to romancers such as Flaubert and Anatole France whose interests are not spiritual but aesthetic and who overstress, for sensational reasons, sexual temptations. No one can read Cassian's *Conferences* without understanding fully what the Fathers of the Desert meant by "purity of heart." They meant the expulsion of *all* the seven deadly sins, the cultivation of all human virtues, the replacement of love of self by love of God. This was also well understood by Athanasius who put his

own great intellectual powers under the directive wisdom of Antonian contemplation.

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

My "Epilogue" has attempted a brief survey of the abiding presence of Anthony through seven ancient and medieval centuries.

What of the present?

Let it be sufficient to say that he is still with us. Cardinal Newman expressed a thought that departed loved ones are close to us, though we cannot converse with them. If the Cardinal, a scholar as to Christian origins, had been equally acquainted with Thomas Aquinas, he would have found the thought theologically affirmed:

"The dead, if we consider their natural condition, do not know what takes place in the world, especially the interior movements of the heart. Nevertheless, according to Gregory, whatever it is fitting the blessed should know about what happens to us, even as regards the interior movements of the heart, is made known to them in the Word: and it is most becoming to their exalted position that they should know the petitions we make to them by word or thought; and, consequently, the petitions we raise to them are known to them through Divine manifestation."

It was not lightly that Athanasius, in process of refuting the Arian heresy, should summon to Alexandria, an aging man who, essentially, belonged to the desert. He summoned him because it was necessary to clinch his argument as to the nature of God by the testimony of a man who had *seen* God. Now, if Anthony, during mortal life had at times attained to that ineffable experience, how much more efficacious must his prayers now be, when his vision of God, is constant, eternal. Queffelec says that his prayers though not recorded in the desert are still efficacious. We should rather say that Anthony is, literally, everlastingly alive and forever at prayer.

The same may be said of the multitudinous army of saints. Anthony's earthly life reached a hundred years; that of the Holy Innocents not more than two; St. Thérèse of Lisieux died at twenty-four, confidently affirming that her work of prayer was just beginning. Certainly there is no lack in heaven of powerful intercessors. And, infinitely above all these is the Blood of the Saviour, "one drop of which can cleanse the entire world of all its guilt."

With these tremendous arsenals of power at our disposal, how



can we fail? The answer is obvious: we fail only by rejecting the love of God, individually or collectively, instead of constantly striving toward its acceptance. Anthony was concerned not only with his own salvation but with the salvation of a world then far more pagan than Christian. The same task is more complicated in our time than it was in his. However, it shouldn't be hard to realize that he is far more aware than we are of the deep sickness of our times.

It is with this thought in mind that I abruptly conclude by repeating the words of his humble disciple:

"All I want is to look at you, Father."

### IN DESERT AND CITY

I have heard the screams of war  
where dunes lay still,  
silent and endless waves;  
heard the shrieks  
when I sought release  
from the city's blare.

I have heard the sounds of sandals  
where vanity strutted on jeweled heels;  
where pride pounded the pavement  
as he hid away in his safe vaults  
security for an old age dreaded.

In the pauses,  
between the trombone's pagan beat,  
I have heard the fall  
of hair against His feet  
as I saw an old woman with an innocent's eyes;  
and there,  
in the city street,  
I heard a call softer than the padre's prayer:  
a long, unspoken, peaceful word  
above the city's cries.

JOSEPH JOEL KEITH

*Mary's life revolved around the Word. She was, therefore, a woman wrapped in silence. We present here part of an excellent book by one of the leading French Carmelite authors. This part of the book (Visage de la Vierge, Librairie du Carmel, 1947) was translated by Father Christopher, O.C.D.*

## The Spiritual Life of the Blessed Virgin Mary

*Father François de Sainte Marie, O.C.D.*

THE interior life of contemplative souls is quite simple because it consists of one single act perpetually renewed. Bright or shadowy, this contemplation of God is at once love, adoration, self-oblation. Ideas and words, if they at times serve to nourish it, cannot express its richness. The act of contemplation is incapable of translation into our language. It is a different manner of speaking from that of men, a speaking of spirit to Spirit.

The spiritual life of the Queen of contemplatives, more than any other, surpasses our understanding and our descriptions. It is too simple and at the same time too rich. In striving to exalt its simplicity, we impoverish it, for our simplicity is mere deficiency. In sketching its richness, we complicate it, for our richness is destitute. One would have to grasp in a single glance its richness and its simplicity. And that is impossible.

If we decompose this pure light through the prism of our understanding, we shall no longer have anything but reflections. We realize this very well; the ideas that we are about to expound are nothing but distant approximations, if one can associate those two terms. They represent not so much the interior life of the Blessed Virgin in itself as its translation into the register of human language.

*Her Faith*

In this perspective, it is her faith that should first receive our praise. As Elizabeth said to her, she is indeed "she who has believed," without ever hesitating in her heart. At first sight, one might be inclined to wonder whether she had to live by faith. Did she not touch with her finger tips, so to speak, the mysteries of our salvation? She "felt" the Incarnation in her flesh, saw with her eyes the Son of God. By her tears and her torments, she co-operated in a special manner in the Redemption of the world. Certainly! But while living these divine things from within, more than anyone else, she found herself at grips with their mysterious obscurity.

From the moment of the Annunciation, her power of reasoning was exceeded: "How shall this be? For I do not know man." Inspired by God, she had doubtless taken a vow to preserve her virginity, and now there is announced to her a future maternity. In the face of this apparent contradiction, the Blessed Virgin knows only one attitude: that of faith. She clings to the divine word: "Let it be done unto me according to Thy word." And, by her faith, like Abraham, she merited the accomplishment of the promise.

Suddenly overwhelmed by the presence of this little Being who received all from her in order to give all to her, inundated by the light of the Word, Mary continued to live in the shadow of faith. She did not have the beatific vision. Like us, she knew God only by His ways reflected in the mirror of creation or the message of revelation, and also by the supernatural intuitions which He gave her.

But if the faith of the Blessed Virgin was of the same nature as ours, it must have been incomparably clearer. No obstacle in her understanding ever opposed the inpouring of the divine light. Faith completely impregnated her being and she had within herself the strength and security of actual vision.

But for all that, the mystery was not "done away with." The birth of the Infant God took place amid the dangers of a census-taking, at night, in cold, poverty, silence. God became man, the Spirit united with flesh, which is, in a sense, its antagonist. He appeared in the very thing that veils Him. How could the Blessed Virgin, though wrapped as she was in an immense peace, have failed to be aware on that Christmas night of the disturbing elements of the



Incarnation? Her faith alone, a pure and immense faith, was capable of appreciating the "gift of God."

It was in the light of this faith that she considered the whole life of her Son. In faith, she lived the mystery of the hidden life. "Not understanding" certain things, such as the delay of the Child in the Temple, she submitted to God's secret reasons which justified them.

The public life of our Lord was no less mysterious: both because of certain words of Christ, certain of His actions, and because of the hardness of heart of the majority, the increasing opposition to His work. But Mary's faith continued to increase, stimulated, so to speak, by the contradictions that reality appeared to oppose to it. To the end, to the foot of the cross, Mary was "she who believes."

This "scandal of the cross" is something men become familiar with slowly. Mary underwent the first shock of it, at a time when exterior reassurances were lacking. Was it not the general rule of her existence to live the mysteries of God almost always alone and deprived of human support? It was she who "blazed the trail." She believed the words of Jesus: "Raised up above the earth, I will draw all to myself," at the very moment when she saw Him an object of repulsion for all: "Crucify Him!" She believed that the salvation of the human race was being accomplished at the very moment when the latter was guilty of deicide. She believed that this bloody tragedy was merely one aspect of the seemingly excessive love of the Father, delivering His own Son to redeem His sons of adoption. . . . She believed all that, at the very moment when the world, unknown to itself, was being saved. The word of God, at that instant, just as during all the other hours of her existence, was her only support, her only strength.

During the long ensuing years that she was required to remain on earth, she lived with this word preserved in her heart and constantly meditated upon it. Her own Son she received from another, from the priest, who alone would henceforth have power over His Body, and she encountered Him all invisible.

### *Her Humility*

The Virgin Mary is she who believed in the mystery of God, who lived under its obscure illumination. With one glance, without stop-

ping to consider herself, she recognized her "lowliness," to use her own expression. Knowledge of God and knowledge of self are one and the same. The keen sense she had of her smallness as a creature appears to us in proportion to the lights she received about God. And her humility is characterized by an admirable balance. Because she is truthful, the Blessed Virgin recognizes in a straightforward manner all that the Lord has done for her: "He Who is mighty has done great things to me." And she avoids the exaggerated formulas that spring from a secret pride. She did not take pleasure in declaring herself "the most unworthy of all creatures." The term she used was more moderate, but so much more beautiful: "the handmaid of the Lord." Mary loved this expression, for it came from her lips at the Annunciation as well as at the Visitation. It well describes her attitude before God, so respectful of His transcendence and, at the same time, so intently at His service. Here again, the Blessed Virgin anticipated the Gospel, whose spirit she already possessed: "Say: we are useless servants." Like Christ, she wanted to serve and not to be served.

That is why her humility manifested itself more in action than in words. The truly humble person is not the one who says much evil about himself (some prefer to speak evil of themselves rather than to say nothing), nor he who seeks outstanding humiliations, in which he really is seeking himself. It is rather the one who loves to be in the background, to be forgotten, and rejoices to be counted as nothing. The Virgin Mary excelled in this form of humility.

She was enveloped in a very humble life. Without doubt, the greater part of her existence was made up of prayer, meditation on Scripture, the accomplishment of her religious duties. But did she not also engage in the most ordinary domestic tasks? She cleaned her house, prepared food for her family, went to get water from the well. Her own hands kneaded the bread and baked it. Duties of charity and hospitality were added to these family obligations; she did not hesitate to render service, as the Visitation proves. She also had to clothe her family: "Her lamp is not extinguished during the night," Scripture declares. "She puts her hand to the distaff and her fingers take up the spindle" (Prov. 31:18-19).

Within such an apparently banal life this creature reaped for God an imperishable glory, so true is it that love alone counts. Stifling

within herself the desire to cry out to the world this good news that she knew so well, she was silent — she who would have been able to speak so well concerning God. And to hide herself she used those stores of ingenuity which men ordinarily employ to call attention to themselves. Moreover, she succeeded in remaining unseen during Jesus' lifetime on earth, and even afterward. One hardly finds any trace of her presence in the early Church, although she was at the heart of it.

Centuries were required before she would consent in some manner to emerge from this shadow and appear in the Church's firmament. And then God, as a reward for her love of obscurity, clothed her with the sun and crowned her with stars. And all generations shall call blessed the one who, for having made herself small, became the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.

### *Her Spirit of Abandonment*

In faith, Mary saw the invisible and perceived her "lowliness" in this light; how could she fail to abandon herself henceforth to all the wishes of the Father? Filial abandonment seems to sum up her whole spiritual life: "*Ecce . . . fiat*"; did she not personally translate the movement of her soul in these two words confided to the Evangelist? Being perfectly at God's disposal, she seemed to be saying to Him each moment: "*Ecce . . . here I am.*" She surrendered herself to Him even to the last fiber of her being, so that His will might be done in her: "*Fiat.*" From the Annunciation to the Cross and the Assumption, she said "yes" in an attitude of total acquiescence. Within the very depths of her soul she lived the petition of the *Pater Noster* in which Christ sums up the attitude of the Christian: "Thy will be done."

In order the better to surrender herself to Love, she suppressed many an impulse that was not demanded for the accomplishment of her duty. Thus, when she guessed the anguish of her espoused, she knew that one word from her would have sufficed to enlighten him and bring peace to his mind. Should she not have intervened? Our human prudence suggests so. But our human prudence is pitiful in comparison with the heroic abandonment practiced by this soul. The Virgin Mary said nothing. She thought less of "doing" the will of God than of letting it "be done" through her, without



mingling any more of herself than necessary with it. Carrying abandonment to its ultimate perfection she would let the Lord intervene personally when He saw fit.

In the course of the Passion, her abandonment was even more perfect. We do not read that she wiped the face of her Son, as Veronica did. She did not even speak a word at the foot of the cross. God did not ask her, as He had on the day of the Annunciation, to pronounce her *Fiat*. He preferred to see it inscribed upon her heart, deep within her. For this was, more than ever, the hour of total abandonment.

Like her faith, this abandonment indicates the measure of the love Mary had for God. Love does not limit itself to giving, which would be too little; love gives itself, surrenders itself. In a sense, one cannot please the Beloved more than by abandoning oneself to His pleasure. For then one even avoids that annoyance which might be caused by imposing oneself upon Him. St. Therese of the Child Jesus understood these things so very well, in her desire to offer herself to Love as a sort of plaything of which He could dispose as He willed! . . . This is the essential attitude of the Gospel. If Christ, in the course of His apostolic life, often said: "My meat is to do the will of My Father. . . . I do what is pleasing to Him" at the culminating point of His existence, He insisted even more upon His abandonment with regard to His Father. It is as if His own will deferred to that of His Father: "Not what I will, but what Thou wilt." And the Father, dwelling within Him, accomplished all His designs.

It was with this same abandonment that the Virgin Mary prayed, with such a simple *prayer*. She "did not multiply words," in addressing God or Christ. This may be well seen at Cana where she was content to say: "They have no wine." This supplication contains, it seems, the whole secret of her prayer. To awaken her faith, to look to our Lord, to make known to Him her own needs and those of the world, and then, without saying any more, without asking for any particular thing from Him, to have confidence in Him, to let Him act according to His own heart.

One likes to think that, at the Cenacle, the Blessed Virgin prayed for the Church that was being born with the same confidence and simplicity, presenting to her God and her Son the spiritual needs

of the Apostles: "The have no wine!" She asked for them the wine of the Spirit which, as it inebriated them with new ardor, would send them forth to the conquest of the world.

And in heaven, what is she doing, if not tirelessly showing to Christ all men with their miseries and needs? Her confidence is such that it knows no hesitation. What she asks, Mary believes that she has obtained, as we see at Cana where, despite her Son's evasive answer, she had the stewards make preparations.

It is difficult to cultivate perfect abandonment, in action as well as in prayer. At first glance such an attitude doubtless appears easy, even quietistic. In reality, if it does not go astray, it leads to heroism and to *complete detachment*, for every action of God in our behalf aims at tearing us away from ourselves. This is because we take back with one hand what we have given up with the other. Mary, on the contrary, in abandoning herself to the action of God, attained the ultimate in detachment. Not that she needed, as we do, to tear herself away from creatures, for she was always so profoundly detached from them. But she needed, in a sense, to detach herself from the very gifts of God, from this Son whom He entrusted to her and later took away from her.

Mary, as a young mother, knew indescribable joy when she caressed and lulled to sleep the Son of God, who had become her Son. It seems that she is beaming, her eyes bright with joy, as she pronounces for us the words of the Liturgy: "Rejoice with me, for I have given birth to God and Man."

But, little by little, Jesus grew up. Then He went away from her, often deprived her of His presence. And Mary let Him go. Only at Capharnaum do we see her insist upon meeting her Son, since she had come with this intention. Most likely she longed to meet Him in a still purer way in faith, but her woman's feelings, her mother's heart, could not bear such separations. And what shall we say of her suffering on the evening of Good Friday, when she had to entrust to the bosom of the earth the Body she had borne in her womb? It was by living her *Fiat* in such circumstances that she achieved complete detachment within herself.

And abandonment permitted her to continue to live an exile in the midst of men, poor of all possessions, but rich in hope, wrapped in silence,

### *The Silence of the Blessed Virgin*

The silence of the Blessed Virgin is very profound. It is the silence of a contemplative soul intent upon God.

God, who is Silence to us, acts in the midst of us in silence. His great interventions in the world are enveloped in obscurity. Such is the humility of the One who hides Himself among men, instead of asserting Himself as He might. He is not in the cyclone, nor in lightning or thunder, but in the light breeze, in the imperceptible murmur. He is silent while acting: "*Et ego tacui.*"

The mysteries of our salvation bear this seal of silence which render them, in their own time, almost unperceived. The Annunciation took place probably in the privacy of Mary's room, as certain Fathers have chosen to imagine it. The Nativity took place in the dead of night, in the country, "when silence takes possession of all things."

The hidden life of Jesus was very silent. Did they speak in the house of Nazareth? One may doubt it. Did not each one live, beyond the world of words and images, in that God who cannot be expressed by man and who asks only his silence in order to express Himself in him?

Mary's soul, taught by that of Jesus, must have engulfed itself more and more in silence. One may guess this from seeing how brief are her words in the Gospel. Not a word too many: that would have been a theft from God.

The supreme lesson that the Blessed Virgin received from Jesus was that of Calvary and of the Passion. At the moment when He was accomplishing our Redemption, Jesus was silent, the Evangelists tell us: "*Jesus tacebat.*" For three years He had spoken to the crowds, sown the seed of the word of God, but this seed could only develop in silence. What a contrast between the diabolical agitation which stirred the people at that hour, *tumultus in populo*, and the divine silence that reigned in the souls of Christ and His mother. Both now knew that nothing more could be said in words; it was their very suffering that expressed to the Father the sentiments of abandonment and of confidence in their souls and that taught men of the tremendous love with which God pursues them.

It seems that the Virgin Mary never again came down from these



heights of silence. For a long time we have no word of her, but we can imagine that she was more silent than ever in order to live within herself, in Faith and Love.

Nevertheless, this silence had nothing of sullenness or constraint about it. Mary spoke as much as charity required of her. Perhaps she exercised a discreet influence upon the Apostles in the early Church, recalling on occasion this or that word of Jesus. We know that she recounted to the evangelist her recollections of the childhood of Christ. Tradition says that she lived with St. John for many years. She must often have recalled to him the great episodes of the life of Jesus, meditating in His company upon the theme of the Fourth Gospel. But it was especially by her silent prayer that she mothered the Infant Church, the secret hearth from which the great Mystical Body began, without even suspecting it, to draw its vital warmth. "Full of grace," even beyond all that she could understand or express of her relationships with God, she radiated grace and life.

### *Her Life of Grace*

Can we penetrate even further into the mystery of Mary, to the very source whence her spiritual life is nourished? The Angel of the Annunciation invites us to do so.

We know the importance placed upon names by the Hebrews, who made of them a sort of definition of the person. Here we find Gabriel, instead of calling the Blessed Virgin "Mary," revealing her new name: "Hail, full of grace" — or better still: "she who has found grace," the "graced" one. Thus, while God has the name "Love," a woman is "Grace." Two abysses are face to face with one another: the One who fills and the one who receives. Before God, here is a creature capable of receiving Him as totally as He pleases to communicate Himself to her.

Other men, by being ever so slightly satisfied with what they are or with what they already possess, shut themselves off from all that they might be or might still acquire. Even saints do not arrive at the point of assimilating fully "the being, the movement and the life" which God offers them the opportunity of drawing from Him. St. John said this in a poignant manner, and the drama is

eternal: "His own received Him not." Only the Immaculate Conception, delivered from the slightest movement of self-satisfaction, truly "capable of God," could receive at every instant, in its totality, the gift of God. The *Fiat* that she pronounced on the day of the Annunciation merely expressed in a word this continuous disposition of her soul.

This is the mystery of predestination of which she, like ourselves, can never find the reason. For it is none other than the eternal Good Pleasure. The Lord made immaculate the one whom He pleased. He knew her and loved her even before she existed. Then His eyes settled upon her, among so many beings scattered about upon the face of the globe. Under this gaze, the creature blessed above all others trembled as she sang: "He has considered the lowliness of His handmaid."

This gaze caused life to penetrate into her being in vast torrents. For when the Lord looks at a soul with this expression of love, He penetrates, so to speak, into the depths of that creature, impregnating every fiber of its being. This is attested by Scripture. They affirm the interior reality of grace: "it shall be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, shall they pour into your bosom" — "Out of His bosom shall flow rivers of living water." God indeed has never finished creating us. He keeps the human clay moist under His thumb, He molds and remolds it to the resemblance of the "Idea" which He has within Himself. The souls of men truly verge upon the Infinite.

And it is not the Lord's fault if they do not expand. Even in the human order, they can, by means of thought, spread to the confines of the universe; by love, they escape the limitation of their ego to become lost in others. All that is little enough in comparison with the prodigious expansion which God offers to His creature, by restoring it to the image of His Son. He then invites it to participate in His infinite perfection. Apart from our egoism and our pride, nothing is capable of limiting on our side this gift of grace. The Lord can always create within us new capacities for receiving it. It is only His good pleasure that fixes limits to this communication. And it has pleased Him to push back these limits to "the confines of the divinity" for the one who has found grace in His eyes. A sentence of the Gospel evokes the secret of Mary's interior life, the

ultimate explanation of the love of God in her regard: "To him who has shall be given."

Such is the source of her extraordinary human personality, as well as of her entire spiritual life. When God acts, says St. John of the Cross, "His work is God." He impresses a trace of Himself upon everything He touches. He places His likeness upon the souls that He divinizes, in order to render them perfect as He is perfect. He is capable of making His creatures blossom forth in the sunlight of His love without doing violence to them and as if by a completely interior growth. As He brooded over the world with His Spirit, was there not called forth that irresistible burst of life which mounted toward Him in a tremendous surge of forms seeking to receive the anointing of the spirit? In the order of grace, He did still more. In this woman, in whom the human race became exalted, He planted a divine seed that blossomed divinely in the warmth of His Spirit and bore savory fruits. The Liturgy reminds us of this by applying to Mary the rich images of Scripture: "Like a palm tree in En-gaddi, like a rosebush in Jericho, like a fair olive tree in the field . . . I bud forth delights like the vine, my blossoms become fruit fair and rich."

### *Her Trinitarian Life*

But grace is much more than the blossoming forth and the spiritualization of a soul. In addition to this created aspect, there is another that is completely divine. Grace is a participation in the very mystery of God. It renders our soul present to the Trinitarian life: "If any one keeps My commandments, My Father will love him, and We will come to him and will make Our abode with him." The least Christian bears God within him. And within him, even without his being conscious of it, the Father generates His Son, and from the Father and the Son the Holy Spirit proceeds.

But is it true to say that he never has any consciousness of this? In His discourse after the Last Supper, Christ made reference to a possible "manifestation" of the divine Guests. It is a confused knowledge that springs from our living contact with Them: "Yet a little while and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me, because I live, and you live . . ."

Through the centuries, many of the faithful have experienced the



truth of these words and have perceived, with greater or lesser intensity, the presence of God within themselves. We have a tendency to consider these experiences as extraordinary. Christ, on the contrary, has them arise quite simply within the soul that longs for this Presence.

Moreover, some very spiritual persons have seemed to realize the Gospel's promise: "Once the soul is introduced in this Mansion," says St. Teresa, "the Persons of the Holy Trinity reveal themselves to it in an intellectual vision . . . all three communicate Themselves to the soul, speak to it, and disclose to it the meaning of that passage of the Gospel in which our Lord announces that He will come, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, to dwell in the soul that loves Him and keeps His commandments."

It is then that a true intimacy is established. In a sort of twilight, that of faith, the soul discerns the particular characteristics of each Person and treats with each of Them in a particular manner. For the Person of the Father is different from the Person of the Son and from that of the Holy Spirit.

The Virgin Mary, since she was established in the state of perfect union with God from her birth, as St. John of the Cross says, experienced this intimacy with the Divine Persons. Perhaps she did not have, at the beginning, an explicit knowledge of the mystery of the Trinity. That had not yet been revealed to the world. It seems quite probable, in any case, that on the day of the Annunciation she became aware of it. The formulas of the Angel speaking of the Son of the Most High and of His Spirit would not have been sufficient to enlighten an ordinary soul. But they must have succeeded in bringing light to her understanding. Had she not, moreover, immediately experienced the presence of the Word within herself and the envelopment of the Spirit of Love?

Whether they were clear or marked by a certain obscurity, the relationships of the soul of the Blessed Virgin with the Divine Persons constituted the very basis of her interior life. As queen and model of all Christians, she was, like them, but in a more eminent degree, the daughter of the Father. Like them also, she had those relationships with the Incarnate Word that Jesus mentioned in the Gospel, but she was above all His mother. Finally, along with all true children of God, she was moved by the Spirit of God.

### *Her Relationship to the Father*

The Virgin Mary is *the daughter of predilection of the heavenly Father*. For the Mother of God, to become "worthy" of that title, had to be "full of grace." Sanctifying grace, for her as well as for us, is birth into heaven, complete filial adoption.

Our Lord seems to suggest these things in the Gospel. He hears a woman extol the remarkable privilege of her maternity. He replies, indirectly praising the attitude of the Virgin: "Rather blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it." He then characterizes the interior life of His Mother in this same implicit manner: "Whoever does the will of My Father in heaven, he is My brother, and My sister, and *My Mother*."

Thus Mary is the beloved daughter of the Father, His "first-born" on earth. He chose a transparent soul in whom He could reflect His attributes, somewhat as if He had made her the mirror of His Word. He wanted this creature to be attentive and docile to His command, somewhat as the Word is to that interior speaking which engenders Him.

Moreover, with the Incarnate Word and in Him, Mary is completely absorbed in the Father, completely in "relation" to Him. From the first moment of His existence, Jesus said to His Father: "Behold I come to do Thy will," and Mary, from the first awakening of her consciousness, must have directed herself toward the Father, to offer her soul to Him. During her whole life she communed, in the depths of her soul, with this mysterious Person. The prayer of her Son, the Lord's Prayer, was her prayer. She lived it interiorly. And by her constant self-surrender, she expressed at each moment this petition: "Thy will be done." She was the "little handmaid" who fulfilled the command received, the child who abandoned herself unquestioningly to all the wishes of the Almighty: "Consider well the course of her life and you will see nothing but a continuous submission," declares St. Francis de Sales. "She goes to the Temple, but her parents lead her there, having promised her to God. Soon afterwards, she is betrothed. Consider her leaving Nazareth to go to Bethlehem, her flight into Egypt, her return to Nazareth: you will find these goings and comings, a marvelous submission and docility. She even comes to the point of seeing her Son and her

God die on the wood of the Cross . . . submitting to the divine wishes by adhering to the will of the eternal Father. . . .”

Thus the Mother of God the Son, throughout her earthly existence, showed herself in all things the daughter of God the Father.

### *Spouse of the Holy Spirit*

She could not be completely such, however, without being *filled with the Holy Spirit*, for “they are sons of God who are moved by the Spirit of God.” The Holy Spirit is the mutual love of the Father and the Son. The Father cannot love a creature except insofar as it resembles His Son. He then loves it with the same love that He bears for His Son. The Word cannot become united to a creature without communicating to it His absorption in the Father, His own Love. Thus They are both intent upon the soul of Mary, infusing Their common Spirit in her. From birth the Blessed Virgin received the Holy Spirit fully. But His possession of her soul became increasingly profound as He continued to embrace it. On the day of the Annunciation, the Angel greeted Mary as “full of grace”: he announced to her a new influx of divine life: “The Holy Spirit will come upon thee. . . .” And the Holy Spirit came upon her anew, to render her divinely fruitful and to fashion within her the flesh of the Saviour. He was not given to her in a limited way. He was not infused into her as if she could contain Him. He engulfed her in His shadow. This “shadow” of which the Angel spoke is a wonderful symbol of intimate union. It has none of the coldness of other earthly images, which are lifeless and formless. . . . The shadow of the Most High is the golden cloud of the Transfiguration, the divine chiaroscuro, the fire that burns without consuming.

Mary’s soul seems, from that time on, to have attained a true fullness of grace. And yet, at Pentecost, the Spirit came to her anew. She who had already received Him so many times was to receive Him again, for herself and for the whole Church. More was given to her who already possessed. . . . This mystery has impressed many holy souls. St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi says of it: “Mary herself awaited Him (the Holy Spirit) although she had already received Him so many times that she was completely filled with Him and had nourished the Word in Him. Mary was



with the Apostles to strengthen them and to urge them to ask for Him. But during those ten days I hardly believe that she remained deprived of His gifts and His special graces; I think rather that at each instant He was communicating Himself to her with new gifts, although He did not appear exteriorly. Mary, an immense ocean of graces, thus awaited the arrival and the new infusion from that unfathomable ocean of love which is the Holy Spirit. Mary awaited union with this Divine Spirit Whom she was to receive and with Whom she was already filled."

Besides these visible and solemn missions, how many secret visits the Holy Spirit must have made to this soul! He celebrated within its depths those "feasts of love" mentioned by St. John of the Cross. As the Living Flame, He wounded and tormented it by His imperceptible palpitations. As the Spirit, He unleashed Himself upon it like that powerful and varied breath which the Mystical Doctor describes, now "a caressing murmur," now "vehement like the harmony of many harpists plucking their strings all together. . . ." These are simple symbols, but so fraught with reality that the Holy Spirit has used them through the ages in visiting many spiritual persons. How did He use them with regard to Mary? We shall never know. But what must He not have done in a soul so entirely surrendered to His action, without a shadow of resistance or selfishness, a crystal ready to reflect light without dimming it or retaining any of it for itself.

Let us not think only of the extraordinary graces. Mary, who more than any other merited the happiness mentioned to Thomas, "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed," must often have traveled in obscure faith. Did not Christ, when tempted in the desert, when in agony, will to experience for Himself something similar to faith's obscurity and anguish in the lower strata of His humanity? But no matter how dark the shadow of the Holy Spirit may have become in Mary at certain times, it never prevented her from living under His constant direction. In her, more than in any other Christian, the words of Christ were realized. The Spirit taught her "all things." He led her "to the fullness of truth."

### *Her Divine Maternity*

The gift of the Holy Spirit which rendered the Blessed Virgin so

perfectly the daughter of the Father, *conformed her also to the Son*. The profoundly intimate union she had with the Incarnate Word cannot be represented by our terms and ideas.

Without a doubt, Mary is essentially the Mother of Jesus. That is the title that the Evangelists give her, the title that she bears in the Church. That is the eminent dignity which won for her the graces with which she was filled, commencing with the privilege of her Immaculate Conception. Thus the divine maternity is the source of the unique intimacy between Mary and Jesus, but it does not explain it completely. The Blessed Virgin was able to give to Christ only His human flesh. But, in exchange, He gave her much more besides: His own divine life. She was born immaculate in virtue of the future shedding of the Blood of Jesus. And, in this sense, she is certainly the "daughter of her Son," according to Dante's expression.

The secret of God's simplicity is to be found in the very distinction of His Persons. We know that Mary's soul, in its relationships with the Three, drew from the very source of the divine simplicity. As she constantly viewed this mystery with a more or less obscure gaze of faith, as she was at certain moments drawn into it in a more luminous way, as she turned toward one or the other of these Persons, she was ever penetrating more deeply into that impenetrable circle which incorporated her in the unity of God. Daughter of the Father, Mother of the Son, Sanctuary of the Holy Spirit, she was, with Them, "one as They are one."



Be Still and Know



# What I am God





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## Solitude Not Isolation

*Father Thomas, O.C.D.*

My soul has employed itself  
And all my possessions in his service  
Now I guard no flock nor have I other office,  
For now my office is in loving alone.  
—St. John of the Cross, *Spiritual Canticle*

THE more completely a man gives himself to Christ, the more intense is his dedication to the interests of the Church. But it is not immediately evident from this that solitude brings the voluntary hermit into closer contact with souls than the physical proximity of the active apostolate. Suppose we put it this way: Solitude represents the investment of one's whole being by way of love and union with Christ in the welfare of the Church. Solitude is not for self, but for others. The apostolic individual *owes it to others* to go into solitude from time to time — to leave souls and all other responsibilities behind that he may attend to Christ alone. Let us examine this point. It is the key to a healthy interest in the eremitical life.

Several Orders offer a life of solitude either as part of their regular observance or as an opportunity for deepening their contemplative spirit. The Deserts of the Carmelite Order are an example of the latter. But it is not the life of solitude that concerns us here. We are interested in the reason for wanting it today and its practical utility in the Church of God.

Seeking solitude could be a spiritual stunt — a spiritual strong-man act — like lifting two hundred pounds above one's head just

to show one's strength. Hardy individuals might be tempted to test their spiritual prowess in solitude just for the satisfaction of being able to endure it. But the satisfaction of living even for a short time a life of complete silence and solitude is not the satisfaction of accomplishment, and one day of utter dryness and desolation in such an environment would probably cure the rash pretensions of any would-be hero.

Solitude could be antisocial. There are people who prefer to be alone for natural reasons. For them solitude is an escape from social responsibilities; the give-and-take of contact with others is burdensome to them. They draw apart not so much to be with Christ as to be by themselves. In them solitude is primarily selfish and unhealthy. Solitude as an escape from the world, *solitude merely as isolation from others is not in the line of perfection or sanctity at all.* It is not even Christian.

True, the traditional concept of eremitical life in the past did emphasize retirement from society, withdrawal from all personal contact with souls. In fact, the Deserts of old were not only in distant places, but approach to them was discouraged, and the legislation governing them jealously guarded the complete separation of hermit from the world. Today, the newly awakened esteem of the layman for the contemplative life and his desire to spend a few days now and then in close proximity to a contemplative community makes the sharing of solitude a dynamic form of edification and an opportunity to diffuse the spirit of real prayer and interior perfection. For a contemplative community to share its solitude with an occasional retreatant is an obligation, not a distraction. But material proximity is but a passing benefit.

It is in the realm of spiritual proximity that the principal act of sharing is accomplished by our solitaries. Solitude is a form of giving and of union, not of withdrawal. The hermit does not retire to the quiet of his hermitage to forget others, but to give himself stand before God alone, *for others*. The heroism of this act lies not more completely to them; he goes behind the veil of silence to in its austerity, but in its burning charity. In the transparent simplicity and rectitude of his intentions, the hermit becomes more pleasing to God and more valuable to others. The unique totality of his dedication to God's interests and to souls lifts him to the

pinnacle of spiritual efficiency. He reaches a redemptive identity with Christ in the purity of his love. "A very little of this pure love is more precious, in the sight of God and the soul, and of greater profit to the Church, even though the soul appear to be doing nothing, than are all these works together" (St. John of the Cross, *Spiritual Canticle*, St. 28, annotation to following).

This purity is not a gift; it is a conquest. When a man goes into solitude there is one thing he cannot leave behind — himself. His attitude toward himself conditions his attitude toward God. Faced with the reality of self, he is tempted to be afraid. He asks himself, "What will I do with *myself* all day?" The toys of his petty projects and vain diversions no longer surround him. The inherent insufficiency of self, its weakness and moral poverty present a picture so painful and humiliating that he would readily welcome a few sense comforts and diversions to help him forget this unpleasant reality. In solitude there is nothing to hide truth and there is no noise to drown it out. Silence is a penetrating restorative, but like the clear air of high altitudes it is liable to produce the preliminary effect of faintness and vertigo. We are a fainthearted lot, we humans, and we cannot stand truth in too big doses. So the poor solitary trembles a bit at first. Then he recovers himself; the purity of the new atmosphere makes him breathe more deeply and his whole being relaxes in peace. He notices the absence of tension in the veteran hermits around him and he begins to feel at home. He realizes from the look on their faces that the question is not, "What will I do with myself all day, but what will I do with *Christ* all day?" And his perspective is restored. He recalls St. Thomas' definition of contemplation, a simple view of truth (*simplex intuitus veritatis*). These men see what matters and live in the light of the truth they behold. This truth has brought them the glorious freedom of soul they manifest. Christ is All in the Desert. The utter weakness and misery of self is best understood and accepted in contrast with the superb strength of Christ.

But he is not through with self, nor has he fully understood the utter misery of its weakness. Solitude has a way of augmenting the magnitude of temptation until its violence reaches the proportions of the fury of hell. Is this what the Scribe meant when he wrote, *Vae soli*, woe to him who is alone? The devil seems bolder in

solitude; he even accosted Christ. If at the same time the soul of the poor hermit is as dry as the parched soil around him, if the things of God awaken not the faintest response, he has sounded the depths of his weakness. He knows by experience, as he never knew before, the truth of those penetrating words of the God-Man, "Without Me you are nothing."

This experience of moral poverty which seems to be the common lot of all hermits accounts for their deep appreciation and abiding love for the Passion of Christ. It is in the Passion that they understand human weakness, for they see it reflected in the face of Jesus, they stand in awe of it in His prostrate form, they embrace it on the cross. In the Passion they find the remedy for all human insufficiency and the ultimate source of the strength and purity of their love. It is in identification with the sadness, exhaustion, and utter dereliction of Christ that their own transformation is begun. In the stillness of nature undisturbed by the fretful labors of man; in the silence of a deep ravine or the majesty of a rocky prominence, the solitary comes face to face with the Man of Sorrows, and the meeting is one of understanding and love. The mind of the hermit bathed in redemptive truth, the will of the hermit set on fire by contact with redemptive love, become instruments of intense apostolic activity. He prays, he offers himself for the Church, for souls. In a solitary place, the Passion of Christ before him, standing midway between God and the urban civilization of his day, with the consciousness of his own weakness to stimulate compassion and the boundless love of Jesus to make him thirst for conquest, he prays. His is an insatiable desire to share divine goodness. He would open the heavens, obliterate malice, sin, and weakness and renew the earth in one gigantic outpouring of grace. Rendered expressionless by his clear perception of the truths of the Redemption and the needs of souls, he takes refuge in the Holy Sacrifice. His own dryness and interior desolation enhance the need for offering the Body and Blood of Christ. He offers the weakness of the world in himself and the strength of the world in Christ; he renews the Passion. He is another savior.

In moments such as these love itself becomes apostolic. It goes out into the world to supply, to regenerate, to save. A little of this love is more active than all works together. A hermit does not draw



away from life, he plunges into its dynamic center. His is not a self-sufficient isolation, but a beneficent self-dedication.

The value of a life of solitude, therefore, is positive not negative. It lies in giving not in withdrawing. Solitude is local separation but spiritual identification. The solitary is impelled not by hatred of the world but by love of persons.

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*Remember how Saint Augustine tells us about his seeking God in many places and eventually finding Him within himself. Do you suppose it is of little importance that a soul which is often distracted should come to understand this truth and to find that, in order to speak of its eternal Father and to take its delight in Him, it has no need to go to heaven. . . . We need no wings to go in search of Him but have only to find a place where we can be alone and look upon Him present within us.*

— ST. TERESA

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## Silence

Catherine de Hueck Doherty

IN 1947 His Holiness Pope Pius XII gave the Church a new kind of lay-religious family. He called it the *secular institutes*. He wrote for it the broad outline of a constitution, that each could adapt to the needs of its apostolate, the mores of its country, and the make-up of its particular groupings.

By the power given him, from on high, he bent down to the laity, and lifted it up into a juridical state of perfection, and, by doing so, opened before the dazzled eyes of the Catholic world a new vision: a whole new concept of apostolic life and works!

These secular institutes, children of earlier, broader, less canonically clear Catholic Action, are today composed of laymen, laywomen (and may encompass even priests, who, by becoming chaplains of such movements, embrace its special way of life also according to their priestly state) who *dedicate their lives totally to God "in the market places" of the world, under the Counsels of Perfection — poverty, chastity, and obedience. By these private vows of a consecration, they engage themselves in the active ministry of the Apostolate, of restoring all things in and to Christ, not by withdrawing from the world, but by rebaptising it, as it were!!!*

The members of these apostolates (secular institutes) are *witnessing to Christ*: witnessing day in and day out, night in and night out, as long as life is, in the heat of the day, the cold of the night, and the very heart of a busy, worldly *market place*. Witnessing by a life of total dedication, total consecration to God; a life lived according to the pristine teachings of the Gospel, and according to the Counsels of Perfection.

Also by *availability* — constant and relentless — to all their fellow men, who have, or may have, need of their help and services.

By a joyous, a glad *hospitality*, that sees Christ in everyone, and, seeing, never locks the doors of its humble abode.

To *witness* . . . to be *available* . . . to offer *hospitality* . . . yes, these are the signs of this new-old apostolic movement.

Yet, in order just to live in the market places of the world — where the knocks on the front door are bells calling the apostles to the Big and Little Hours . . . where the cry of orphaned or sick children, harried mothers, drunken men — is the call for long night vigils; where the endless noise of exhaust, motor horns, clanging of a thousand bells, and the whisper of a never ceasing city traffic, or of never sleeping city streets — *such apostles need silence*.

In order to *witness to Christ*, in such surroundings, such constant calls on the whole person, that never allows any compromise, no matter how constant the provocation, or how justified the circumstances — *such apostles need silence*.

To be always *available*, not only physically, but by empathy, sympathy, friendship, understanding, and boundless *caritas* toward all, who call on such apostolic availability day and night — *such apostles need silence*.

To give joyous, unflagging *hospitality*, not only of house and food, but of mind, heart, body, and soul — *such apostles need silence*.

Yet, not the silence that is just the absence of outward noise. This may be helpful, but not absolutely necessary. No, rather the silence of deep, inward recollection that no earthly noise can disturb.

For true silence is the search of man for God.

True silence is a suspension bridge that a soul in love with God builds to cross the dark, frightening gullies of its own mind, the strange chasms of temptation, the depthless precipices of its own fears, that impede its way to God.

True silence is the speech of lovers. For only love knows its beauty, completeness, and utter joy.

True silence is a garden enclosed, where alone the soul can meet its God. It is a sealed fountain, that He alone can unseal, to slacken the soul's infinite thirst of Him.

True silence is a key to the immense and flaming Heart of God. It is the beginning of a divine courtship that will only end in the

immense, creative, fecund, loving silence of union with the Beloved — *the beatific vision*.

Yes, such silence is holy; a prayer, beyond all prayers, leading to the final prayer of constant presence of God, to the heights of contemplation, when the soul, finally at peace, lives by the will of Him, whom she loves totally, utterly, and completely; lives in joy amid trials, lives with the music of God's silent voice echoing in her always.

Then this silence breaks forth in a charity that spills itself without counting the cost in love and service of neighbor . . . then *witnessing* to Christ anywhere, always, becomes second nature. Then being *available* is delightful and easy, for in each who comes to avail himself of such "availability," the soul sees clearly the face of her Love. Then *hospitality* is deep and real, for a silent heart is a loving heart; and a loving heart is hospice to the world.

Without silence, there could be no *secular institutes*, and the vision of the Holy Father would whither and die.

But how to achieve such silence? Not only for lay apostles but for all Catholics everywhere? For such silence is not the exclusive prerogative of secular institutes, nor of monasteries or convents. No. A thousand times No!

This simple, prayerful silence is *everybody's* silence. Or if it isn't, it should be. The Catholic's, the Christian's, of any denomination who loves God; the Jew's, who has heard in his heart the echoes of God's voice in His Prophets; the pagan's, whose soul has arisen in search of Truth, in search of God. *For where noise is — inward noise and confusion — there God is not!*

How to achieve this silence? The first step to it is to "stand still." Stand still and take stock: Stock of those yesterdays that have gone forever; stock of today, that is so fast joining our yesterdays; stock of their fruits, that may even now be lying withered and dried up in nerveless hands, hearts, souls, and minds.

STAND STILL. Stand still, and allow the strange, deadly restlessness of our tragic age to fall away like the worn-out dusty cloak that it is — a cloak that once was considered beautiful. As the multi-colored zest of youth . . . the magic carpet to a tomorrow, that in the reality of living had no being, but now can be seen for what it is: *A running away from oneself, from that journey inward that*



*all men must undertake to meet God dwelling within the depths of their souls.*

STAND STILL and look deep into the motivations of life. Are they such, that true foundations of sanctity can be built on them? For truly man has been born to be a saint — a lover of Love, who died for love of us! There is but one tragedy: *not to be a saint*. If these motivations of life are not such that they can be true foundations for sanctity, then the soul must start all over again and find other motivations. *It can be done. It must be done. It is never too late to begin again.*

STAND STILL. And lifting hearts and hands to God, pray that the mighty wind of His Holy Spirit may clear all these cobwebs of fears, selfishness, greed, narrowheartedness, away from the soul; that His tongues of flame may descend to give courage, *to begin again.*

And all that *standing still* can be done in the midst of the outward noise of daily living and the duties of state of life. For it will bring at once order into the soul. God's order. And God's order will bring tranquillity. His tranquillity. And it will bring silence.

The silence of a lover listening with all his being to the heartbeats of his beloved. The silence of a Bride, who in her utter joy listens to her heart re-echoing every word of the beloved. The silence of a mother, so deep, so inward, that in it she *listens* with her whole being to the voice of her children playing in a nearby yard, cognizant without effort of the slightest change in each voice. A listening silence done while competently, efficiently, and lovingly attending to her daily chores.

This silence will come and take possession also of lover, bride, mother, worker, nurse, apostle, priest, nun — if only the face of their soul, in the midst of their daily occupations, is turned to God.

At first such *silences* will be far and few between. But if nourished with a life of liturgical prayer, mental prayer, with the sacramental life of the Church, slowly, slowly, like the seedling of a mighty tree, silence will grow and come to dwell in a soul oftener and oftener. Then suddenly, one day it will come to stay.

Then the soul will turn to its Beloved. Walking softly on this incandescent path of silence He will come. His coming — once experienced — will make silence, henceforth, a precious thing. Now

it will deepen, and, encompassing the whole of man, will make man its own.

Yet, strangely enough, with silence dwelling constantly in the soul — a Mary of Magdela at the feet of Christ — speech will come most easily to people whose souls are completely recollected — in that silence — in the Lord. Speech and works too. They will move among men gently, softly, kindly. Love will shine in their every gesture, in their every word. There will always be time to do something more for someone, somewhere.

Nourished by the waters of silence, *caritas* will begin to sing its song of love, making all men and women literally spend themselves for others. At home, abroad, in any and every state of life, on all streets and market places of the world. *And lo! Behold. Their strength — even as their youth — will be renewed as an eagle's!*

Slowly, imperceptibly, the world around about them will change. For the silence within them will become part of God's loving, mighty, creative, fecund silence. And His voice will be heard through them. And His face will be seen in theirs. And the light of it will become a light to their neighbor's feet.

Thus silence will bring peace to all. And the prayer of silence, will be heard in our land far and wide. And the Beloved will once more come to dwell among men; for His vineyard — the world — will be restored to Him.

## BEYOND SMALL JOY

Why is it, Christ, that You  
are often heard? Between  
orchestral beats, between  
the click of heels, thin joy's  
brief rest, You move as if  
the dancers' glossy floor  
is watery green.  
Why do I move away  
from the perfumed satin's sway,  
and sense a silent joy  
as I walk across Your grass  
as if I hear You pass?

Why is it, Christ, that You  
are often seen? Beyond  
the valley of my lust,  
the hollow of my greed,  
a self-betraying need  
a prairie's sweep of dust,  
You hang, oh, Christ, and still  
bleed on that ageless hill,  
where I, not You, am tried —  
yet You are crucified.

JOSEPH JOEL KEITH

*Without sufficient supplies of silence and solitude man could never discover himself. The Jesuit-author of the University of Detroit has written for Review for Religious and Pastoral Life.*

## "Who Am I?"

*J. C. Schwarz, S.J.*

IN THE late spring of 1958, a large metropolitan daily, *The Detroit Free Press*, carried a provocative "want ad" in its "personals" column. This unpretentious entry requested information concerning the family background and identity of an infant girl abandoned in an alleyway, June 17, 1923. The baby, warmly dressed, was found amid rubble by a compassionate couple who raised her as lovingly as though she were their own — along with their seven others. Today the child has grown to a lovely woman, married, residing in the East. Still, fundamentally, she does not know who she is. And it was this woman herself, the onetime foundling, who candidly asks a reading public for assistance in discovering the answer to her life's basic question, "Who am I?" In humble honesty, she confesses that she does not know the answer to her own question.

As a matter of fact, millions today, if they were to be equally honest before the world, would be obliged to confess that they too cannot answer this question concerning their own true identity. Of course, easily they can tell name, address, home, and parents; describe the daily round of activities which circumscribe their lives. But beneath these incidental details lie unsounded levels of personal identity, levels of deeply meaningful reality, levels which must be boldly explored by every human being before he can face and answer the disturbing question: Who am I? What am I? For what purpose is my life? Whence have I come, and toward what destiny is the ceaseless activity of my life carrying me? The woman above, the foundling of yesterday, challenges her own identity, and deliberately searches for the answer. Millions more, on an even more fundamental level, could profitably imitate her search for a true, ultimate identification of self.

## *The Massive Crowdedness of Our Lives*

Ordinarily one would expect that any person could give a convincing reply to himself, and to others, concerning any fundamental question about himself. Such, we see upon observation of the lives around us, is clearly not the case. And why? Because the enormous conspiracy in America against self-reflection and honest self-confrontation reaches with anesthetic effect into multiple aspects of modern life. The anesthetics of treadmill ambition in work, with social status dependent on a foundation of material possessions — multimillion dollar entertainment industries beamed nightly (and daily) into countless family homes — pleasures of innumerable sorts pursued with grim, incongruous determination — these factors, in lethal combinations, deaden the pain of problems resident within every personality created by God. A veritable conspiracy against silence engulfs child and parents alike (note, for instance, the newly available pocket radios and belt radios), render millions numb in the spiritual nerve centers of their lives. Truly afraid to be alone, lulled by the massive campaign against thought and wisdom, many millions could do no more than stare uncomprehendingly at the question, "Who are you, and what does your life mean?"

Many a Catholic as well, mentally thumbing his catechism for a formulated reply, would be numbered among those who really prefer to be left undisturbed by probing and perhaps painful inquiries into one's own soul. True, a Catholic education, of whatever extent, does endow mind and heart with at least the raw materials of divine wisdom. But the world of today busily, between commercials, sows abundant tares and fat-leaved weeds in grounds where God had sought a garden. Perhaps the parable of the sower, encountering many types of ground, has an application even to those who possess but only thinly cultivate the true Faith.

Amid ominous sounds of our national and international structure groaning beneath pressures of mounting tension, a cold wind of despair blows broadly. A gifted man of letters, and French statesman as well, Andre Malraux, has given pungent expression to this despair:

Imagine a large number of men in chains, and all condemned to death, every day some of them being butchered before the eyes of others, and others seeing



their own plight in the plight of their fellows. . . . This is the picture of man's estate. . . . (The real defeat is) having to accept one's destiny, one's place in the world, to feel shut up in a life there's no escaping, like a dog in a kennel.

A student of Malraux' writings has concluded, considering his restless, adventuresome career, that "Malraux' life is a saga of modern godless man *in search of himself*."

The search for the true self which lies buried, but not inaccessible, below the politic manners and outer gesturings of daily life finds expression in many ways — in the gropings of a Malraux, or in the profound puzzlement of a Matthew Arnold. The latter feels instinctively that there must lie within him a "Buried Life":

But often, in the world's most crowded streets,  
But often, in the din of strife,  
There arises an unspeakable desire  
After the knowledge of our buried life;  
A thirst to spend our fire and restless force  
In tracking out our true, original course;  
A longing to enquire  
Into the mystery of this heart  
Which beats so wild, so deep in us — to know  
Whence our lives come and where they go.

Another approach to the same interior quest has been taken and gracefully expressed by Anne Morrow Lindberg. In her *Gift from the Sea* she tells of pondering this complex modern life from the vantage point of a respite in solitude, briefly cherished:

I mean to lead a simple life . . . but I do not. I find that my frame of life does not foster simplicity. My husband and five children must make their way in the world. The life I have chosen as wife and mother entrains a whole caravan of complications. . . . It involves food and shelter; meals, planning marketing, bills and making the ends meet in a thousand ways . . . modern simplification (electricity, plumbing, refrigerator, gas stove, oil burner, dishwasher, radios, TV's, car and numerous others) . . . health, doctors, dentists, appointments, medicine, cod-liver oil, vitamins, trips to the drugstore . . . education, schools, car pools, extra trips for basketball or orchestra practice . . . clothes, shopping, laundry, cleaning, mending, letting hems out and sewing buttons on, or finding someone else to do it . . . friends — my husband's, my children's, my own — countless arrangements.

Who can deny that such an accumulation, so familiar today — and surely not of itself evil or wrong in any way — functions as a highly effective anesthesia? Malraux, bitter in the search, Arnold "longing to inquire," Mrs. Lindberg sifting her maze of activities hoping

to touch the core beneath them — these support an honest woman who asks of a reading public: "Who am I?"

What can be the answer? How can it be found?

### *Man Needs a Mirror*

Strangely enough, a cartoon of three panels in a current periodical suggests an avenue for the search. In the first panel a chubby infant gurgles in his crib — only this infant has a mustache: "Mr. X as his mother still thinks of him." The second panel depicts a small boy, short pants, cap pistol in hand: "Mr. X as his wife thinks of him." In the third panel we find a chesty baron of industry, many phones awaiting his attention, with a battery of secretaries: "Mr. X as he sees himself." But the help in man's search for himself appears only if a fourth panel is added, a panel devoted to the utter truth, to the plain facts: "This is Mr. X as Almighty God sees him!"

Modern man's search for himself, then, suffers from a wrong approach altogether, a hopelessly misleading emphasis. For, note, a man cannot so much as know the simple facts of his own exterior appearance unless he have the aid of a mirror which, by reflection, tells him of himself. And note that the inner mechanisms of the body, close at hand though they are, remain beyond all vision except by the modern miracle of X ray. These are merely physical. How then will a man know his spiritual reality, his soul and personality and true meaning unless he find some reflector to aid him? Only if he turn out from himself will he ever find himself. Paradoxically, only in God can we find our true selves. Only He can reveal to us what we are and what our lives truly mean. Alone, no matter how prolonged the search, no sure answer is possible.

Today an entire science exists devoted to the proposition that man is a mystery unto himself. Psychiatry and its allied disciplines wander through the labyrinthine corridors of the human psyche in search of the "key" by which the mysterious pattern may be resolved — somewhat in the manner of military intelligence "breaking" the secret code of enemy communications by discovering the "key" thereto. But the key simply is not there; it never will be found there. It is in God; He alone can and will tell us who and what we are.

Contrast is needed for discovery. For instance, in World War II,

snow troops donned white garb to blend with the dazzling background against which they maneuvered; lacking contrast, enemy troops found them difficult to discern. So with us. Man can discern nothing of himself so long as he poses the hectic pattern of his own daily round against the similarly hectic background of people and things about him. Anne Lindberg felt that. Rather, when at once he places himself as it were against the Eternal Creator — his Heavenly Father and Lord — then there is contrast. Then there is awakening. Then we begin to see.

### *Absurdity of a Man-Centered World*

What shall we see? We are apt to discover that the truth is quite the opposite of our daily presumption. In daily living, proud man strongly tends to regard himself in Sputnik fashion, or the reverse of it. The tiny Sputniks chase their orbits about the vast earth. Similarly man tends to presume himself an earth, a centrality, an all-absorbing fact about which all other persons revolve. His own little world finds himself in the center with subordinate individuals patterned about him. Coming before the titanic contrast of the Creator Himself, loving and majestic, one finds that the reverse is the truth. God is the centrality; He is the source, the importance, the norm and standard, the source and the goal, the power and the meaning, the love and the reward. Remove God — and man lapses into meaninglessness. Life, as Malraux senses, turns acrid.

In our own century a young French girl lived a short life completely alight with the wisdom of God, given and nurtured in contemplation: going down into God and learning of herself. Elizabeth of the Trinity wrote:

We must not, as it were, stay at the surface. We must enter continually more deeply into the divine Being by means of recollection. . . . Thus every day we must go down deeper along the path of the abyss that is God; letting ourselves slide down the slope in a confidence that is full of love. . . . It is at the bottom that we shall feel the divine "shock"; the abyss of our poverty, our nothingness, confronted with the abyss of the mercy, the immensity, the All, that is God! There we shall find strength to die to ourselves and, losing every trace of self, we shall be changed into love.\*

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\* *Reminiscences of Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity* (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1952), p. 196. Elizabeth died in 1906, age 26, a Carmelite, in Dijon, France.

Looking on God as the source, goal, and meaning of our life we come to the knowledge that we ourselves are not the center of our own existence. He is. In His image and likeness, as Holy Scripture reveals, we were brought into being, and in expression of an idea in the Divine Mind we were each personally and singly formed. No wonder then that Karl Adam can write with great accuracy that man stands before Christ as a question before its answer. Each person is a complex of questions, each question possessing a potential of agony if no answer be found. Many moderns, such as an Albert Camus (1957 Nobel Prize winner in literature) in *The Fall*, manifest the writings of a personality locked in with itself. To the contrary, the autobiography of a Karl Stern, Jewish psychiatrist who came to Christ, expresses the singing release of heart experienced when a question finds its Answer.

Ancient sages were fond of the maxim, “know thyself”; in this they supposed wisdom to lie, and of course such was all the wisdom they knew in their day. But to “know thyself” we must first know Him whose we are, and we must know that we are His, confess it, seize it, and live it. Lip service and church service alone takes us only a short way down the silent road into God and into ourselves. Shaking the mind free of the anesthetics of modern living as best we can, each must come to God to learn the meaning of his own existence. The answers to our basic questions are acquired not suddenly, but progressively, never yielding full satisfaction until we fully return to Him who is our origin and our destiny. As origin and destiny, no wonder, then, that He also is our meaning.

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*I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.*

—HENRY DAVID THOREAU



# Essay on Solitude

Father Zen Buddy

NO WONDER Miss Mackenzie could have a *Love Affair with the State of Maine*, and then write about it so trenchantly.

I fell under its spell just as soon as I lay down on its rocky coast, relaxed, stretched out prone, absorbed into the primeval rhythms of the seashore, coaxed little by little into a vibrant, stimulating kind of quiescence by the splash of wave on the beach, the wind in the trees, and the slow flapping of gulls across the bay.

In this setting one need not withstand like a giant the onslaught of the environment in order to think and love and live as a man. Here one can lie empty, open, completely receptive to the message of the sea. The vestiges of noise, unrest, anxiety that lie distractingly, menacingly in the depths of the soul are washed pure and clean by the sea and the wind; the mind of man becomes pure and transparent like the clear blue sky; his heart is dilated and expanded to the dimensions of the universe. All that is selfish, petty, and picayune is destroyed then and there where land, sea, and sky converge into splendor and mystery. Would that all men could be gathered here to find harmony, simplicity, and unity; and thus to find themselves balanced, whole, and alive!

Half an hour ago I got off the bus at York Corners, where a gracious lady, driving a huge taxi, met me and carried me, gratis, to York Beach. Most of the beach people, like my Murphy cousins, returned to the city some weeks ago to recuperate and reorientate after a climactic, carefree, and exhausting Labor Day week end. And so the Murphy house, which is right on the high edge of the ocean, is empty of people, but full of food, even a freshly baked cake and a ham.

It is a brilliant, crisp day with a blazing sun that sends warm,

glowing shafts of light into the darkest recesses of the earth, with a wind that stirs to life this sea-girded town of rocks and winding lanes, of clustered houses and empty hotels.

Nighttime. Just returned from a walk. It was a delicious evening. My whole body seemed but one sense imbibing delight through every pore. The night is clear and cool and quiet. Even the town is quiet — desolate, ghostly. I stood for a while with the lonely town at my back, hugged in by a rocky, flowery cliff that shores the ocean like a terrestrial half moon. And all the time the ocean washed the land with maternal thoroughness, as it foamed and seethed with white fury at my feet. The pungent flavor and bourbonic tang of the Atlantic still lingers lusciously in my nose and on my tongue. I feel it in the marrow of my bones chastening, quickening all the powers of the soul, readying them for a response and a surrender to a "love that lies just beyond all other loves"; to a reality that makes everything else real, and alone, is ultimate, immutable, and transcendent; to a Person so infinitely attractive, so unspeakably bright with beauty, goodness, and truth, that He gives light and luster to the sun, so inexpressibly perfect that He satiates and fulfills the endless welter of all human desires. A place like this incites a man to pursue with ardent longing, ceaseless striving, and heightened anticipation a profound and continuous communion with God.

The Big Dipper hangs bewitchingly overhead. It is easy to see the benevolent Hand of God at the end of that glorious golden cup, offering us water to drink and never to thirst again, water that becomes in us a fountain of joy springing up into life everlasting.

On the way home, walking along the shore, I passed by two young girls. They have a lilt and a loveliness that is denied every other creature. No wonder they have power to dazzle and bewilder man, capable as they are of raising him to the stars or pulling him down to the level of the beast.

I went to sleep last night with the music of the waves in my ears. At seven o'clock this morning I offered Mass in a cold and empty church. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is by nature a community affair, a banquet, in fact; and so I had to reach out in spirit to gather in all of God's people and all of God's things, incorporating them into this most dramatic and most important act in all the

world. How nice to be able to trot down there in old clothes, oblivious of convention, unconscious of a role to play, a dignity to wear, braced by the chilly morning air, wind-blown on the edge of the sea; and then to simply slip on the tunic, and cowl, gather things together — and then stand, alone, before the altar of God: to re-enact the most solemn and momentous drama: the redemption and transformation of the world; to be Christ in the sight of God and in the name of Humanity, to represent Christ in His redeeming act of love, praise, and atonement; to adore the God of might, majesty, and mercy; to thank the Lord of the World for His great glory and the exultant glory of the earth; to offer and restore to Him the land, the sea, and the stars; and to receive from God a gift far greater than the ocean, purer than the clearest sky, better than the best our earth can offer — divine and infinite and eternal gift. God gives Himself.

I am reading "in character": *Country of the Pointed Firs*, by Sarah O. Jewett. Very pleasant. I have met less than a handful of people who have read this extraordinary book. Willa Cather regards it as one of the three greatest books ever written in America. I think she is right.

A timely knock on the window by Mr. Byrne, who lives nearby and evidently knows the culinary tendencies of men who live alone — and I was saved from my can of beans, whisked away to Ogunquit, a place literally teeming with atmosphere, where we enjoyed steamed clams and lobster rolls. Later I walked to Nubble Light and prayed there a while.

It is a cold, sharp, glistening sort of day that grows warmer gradually. There is no autumnal mist on the coast, nor any fog; instead of these the sea, the sky, the shore line of rocks, clumps of grass and flowers, the island hills, every bush and every tree radiate with an unusually deep color, a resplendent clearness. There is something shining in the air, a certain luster on the water, and on the still unfaded summer grass — a northern look, to be sure, that belongs to this place at this time.

Few men can enjoy such unbridled freedom; and there is hardly anything I enjoy so much — but oh, so briefly! A man ought to be this free: to be able to do what he wants and what he ought, rather than what convention, human respect, and mediocrity seem

to dictate. A man ought to shed the crippling encumbrances that hamper his freedom. Physical shedding in the first place, like clothes, that is: too many, too much, and too selective. A small suitcaseful should be plenty. And a house like this would be a blessing: no heat, no telephone, no hot water, few gadgets to go wrong; no rugs to keep clean or trip you, no curtains to impede the light and to preserve and pronounce stale cigar smoke; no puny little doilies to make tables less usable and chairs overgrown pin cushions. Spiritual shedding then becomes easier: no pride, vanity, insincerity. This art of shedding entrains a whole caravan of highly human achievements, such as serenity, thoughtfulness, contemplation, joy, and a life lived like a child's or a saint's, in the immediacy of the here and now.

I just threw another log on the fire. The hearth certainly provides a contemplative setting. It seems easier to establish a domain of silence, to recollect the mental forces, to meditate, to prevent solitude from degenerating into isolation. How the best reading, the most scintillating conversation, the most sacred family relationships have been achieved by the hearth is easy to understand. David Henry Thoreau, that robust Concord solitary, was a "man who could see beauty in ashes." He said that his firewood warmed him twice, once when he cut it, and again when he burned it. Fire has a strange and uncanny power of infatuation — like the music of the gods. Turn off all the lights, and let the blazing logs cast their magic fire spell. Thoughts come quickest then; articulation is easiest, books are wisest; pipe smoke tastes best; children are dearest with firelight dancing in their eyes; wives are more intuitive; husbands more congenial; monks more full of mirth. No science will ever determine how much a hearthfire can warm the heart. And yet it is just a faint whisper, an elusive shadow of the supreme reality that every man must contact and to which he must adhere. These are all gifts of God that ignite, reflect, and adumbrate. But they have no meaning outside of and apart from God who, alone, can give infinite warmth, and light, and substance to a man's life. We find fulfillment, and satiation, and fruition when God transforms us into His true likeness by the consuming fire of His Love.

The music of the fire is enhanced by the oldest voice of the world — the wind, which sweeps over the land, purifying it with the salt



and iodine of the ocean, and filling the house with the clean tang of its wild and unpredictable adventure. The wind may seem too sharp when it whips you in the face, too severe, even inimical when it lifts your hat from your head. But how dull the world without it! We should walk in the dank, oppressive cellar of motionless air, always monotonously calm, forever stagnant. Give me instead an autumn day full of frenzy and frolic, everything daft with the wind racing downhill to meet and caress and unearth me, tossing fruit from the trees for me, making bushes bow to me and animals wink at me and leaves dance for me, making the earth ring with the challenge of its freedom and its power. There can surely be in this world no more cathartic experience, no more exquisite entertainment, no more abiding pleasure than this — the October Ballet.

I shall always remember this week, or these few days, fondly and wistfully: the long hours when nothing happened except the change of tides and the course of the earth around the sun.

Last night I lay out on the rocks under the star-studded roof of the sky with the splash of sea all around me. The town was as empty as ever, a warm glow of light here and there, a few solitary people gazing aimlessly and thoughtlessly out of their business windows waiting for someone to come, or for something to happen. I purposely chose for my bed of rock a spot far out into the water and away from the house, on the other side of the bay; for I wanted to belong to nothing, to be referred to nothing, I wanted no roof but the vast heavens, nothing to limit the span of my eye but the endless stretch of the sea. I wanted to depend on no one but Him who said: "I am the beginning and the end . . . the way, the truth, and the life." I was utterly and wholesomely alone with God. I was free.

On my way back home, ten-thirty p.m., coming across the beach — those two girls again. They drove up on the beach where I was walking, got out of their car, ran out in front of me with agile, dainty steps, then back into their car and off. They were young, gay, and beautiful. Every movement they made gave glory to God. They lit up the night with a brand new kind of brilliance, and gave life, fresh and ebullient, to the dark, dull town. They wore their hair short and neat on the nape of their necks and they also wore bermudas. There was no discernible reason for their presence. Their

coming and going was full of mystery; they were like phantoms of teasing enticement.

They are worth a few moments' pondering. The joy and pleasure a man knows in his intimate relationship with a woman, I shall never know. I, like all priests, forego this temporal thrill in favor of eternal ecstasy and apostolic efficiency. It is, I believe, the only earthly pleasure to which I am a total stranger. Other pleasures I could have, at least vicariously, or could know by hearsay. But not this. The pleasure inherent in sex, charged with the mystery of love, is so deep and indefinable, that it is, by its very nature, incommunicable to others. But it is entirely right that we sacrifice this pleasure. If love of the flesh is merely the preface to love of the spirit, then why cannot some men who are irrepressibly anxious to get to the spirit skip the preface? The happiness that comes from the unity of two in one flesh is a shabby thing compared to that greater communion of two in one spirit. We shall never get used to women in the sense that their mystery shall ever be unveiled before us. And it is precisely because of this enduring sense of alertness, wonder, and awe, that we, of all the people in the world, shall consistently know women the best and appreciate them the most; for our view of them shall always be undimmed and unspoiled by greed, emotion, or selfishness. It is easy — and a pity — to grow accustomed to even the best things in life. A jeweler, for instance, casually handles the most precious stones without troubling to admire them. But to us a woman will always be wrapped in mystery; and in that mystery we shall always, I pray, find God.

I brought my mail to town about an hour ago. As I neared the edge of town I could hear two people talking in a house on the other end of town. That's how quiet and desolate it is. An old man with a cane was the only other person on the street. When he saw me coming he stopped abruptly, hid behind a pole, and from that safe vantage point he studied me intently. On my way back I noticed that he had crossed over to my side of the street, and was obviously waiting or watching for me at the corner. But as I got near the corner, he turned on his heels and hustled away with remarkable and unexpected agility. I never saw a caned man move so quickly. Suddenly, however, he must have felt shame in running from a stranger, who he probably regarded as a wee bit of a boy;

so, without stopping, he turned and yelled threateningly: "Come on, you S.O.B., I'll take you, I'll take you." With that challenge flung back at me he slipped into a cozy-looking barroom. As I walked by, I caught a glimpse of him standing needfully at the "courage counter."

This is the last day of my highly cherished solitude. So I am drinking in all of Maine that I can. I am sitting out on the rocks. No throne in all the world is half so elegant and lofty as my petro-seat on the coast of Maine. And no man enthroned has even a particle of the untrammelled joy and happiness that is mine here on my rocky seat of York. I envy not the Pope, hemmed in on all sides by the palatial glory and magnificence of St. Peter's. I pity him. My rock is an easier throne on which I can sit or stand or stretch out with reckless, carefree abandon, finding in every cleft and fissure a brand-new, fresh vantage point to admire and absorb the sea with its rollicking, rolling surf tumbling and pounding all about me.

It is time to go back to my monastery to share with my brothers their life of prayer, of monastic rigor, of quiet joy, and apostolic labor, striving with all my might and their help to give glory to God, to save my soul, and to contribute something of value to the world.

These few days have broken the pattern of monastic routine. They have, therefore, refreshed and recreated. That is helpful. And so I thank God for the sea — the squirming and crawling of it, the slithering and sliding, the terror and delight of it. I thank God for the sun swinging ponderously above the cloudy mountain camps across the bay, throwing its royal image along the sea. I thank God for the trees that stand here saturated with the evening, each gilt-edged leaf perfectly drunk with excellence and delicacy. I thank God for the unique and incomparable performance of this October Ballet, produced and executed this year in Maine, a place never more enticing, never more exhilarating than in October when summer and autumn merge to paint scenes, concoct scents, and create sounds that will haunt me forever with persuasive allurements and relentless pursuit.

# BOOK REVIEWS

**AMERICAN CATHOLICS: A Protestant-Jewish View**, by Stringfellow Barr, Robert McAfee Brown, Arthur Cohen, Rabbi Arthur Gilbert, Martin Marty, and Allyn Robinson, with an Afterword by Gustave Weigel, S.J.; edited by Philip Scharper, Sheed & Ward, New York, 1959, 235 pp., \$3.75

*Phenomenon* originally meant anything sense-perceptible, while *noumenon*, its opposite, meant anything mind-perceptible. *American Catholics: A Protestant-Jewish View* is a phenomenological discussion with American Roman Catholics by six men of good will; it answers the question: "How do American Roman Catholics appear to their Protestant and Jewish neighbors?" These six open letters are frank without rancor, honest without covert insinuation, and explicit without taunts. Some of the letters are nervous while other are assured. However, their view of us is *phenomenological* (i.e., from the outside). And this brings us to a first opinion of this book or these six booklets. . . .

As a stain-glass window may be viewed both from within and without, or phenomenologically and noumenologically, so the Roman Catholic Church may be so viewed. From the outside, the Church appears as a religious society instituted in past times by Jesus Christ and today as world-extended. With saint and sinner members, its history is not always one of edification; in fact, from mere reason, the Church appears as a paradox and a puzzle, if not a labyrinth of confusion. But from within, as in the case of the stain-glass window and seen with the eyes of faith, the Church is a harmonious whole with the enigmas and mazes on a higher plane reconciled. But we cannot expect this within approach from our Protestant and Jewish neighbors!

As Catholic, we know the Church to be complete and continuous, involving a history of salvation which includes these principal phases: (1) the prepar-

atory phase of the Old Testament; (2) a New Testament phase of earthly realization in which we exist now; and finally a phase of heavenly fulfillment as revealed in the Book of the Apocalypse.

As Catholics, we see that there is an enduring (eternal) element, since the Church existed in the eternal plan of God, and will endure forever after Christ's return. However, there are transitory elements, changing according to the particular phase of the history of salvation. Hence the Church today is similar to a Manhattan skyscraper under construction. The Church is neither the skyscraper alone which is under construction (the enduring element) nor the scaffolding (the transitory element) by which construction is taking place. It is the whole project: the skyscraper enveloped in the scaffolding and built by the wooden hands of the scaffolding. When the Church—the skyscraper—is completed at Christ's return, then the scaffolding (the transitory elements of the hierarchy and the sacraments) will be taken away as no longer necessary. But today the Church is not finished and is therefore indistinguishable from the scaffolding. In fact the skyscraper is concealed by the framework, containing and supporting it!

As Catholics, we owe the Church obedience. Let us not confuse obedience with passivity, laziness, and servility. We see the authority of God in anyone who holds His warrant but our eyes are not closed to the pages of history: yes-men in high positions; vested interests and careerism; and the human tendency of authority becoming tyrannical and arbitrary. Ours is the obedience



of free and intelligent sons and daughters of the Church. Ours is not criticism OF authority but criticism TO authority. This Martha did in the Gospels! Perhaps our post-Reformation habit of standing together for common defense has inhibited that apostolic frankness and criticism TO authority as seen in the New Testament. As laity, we are not mere "passengers" but workers actively engaged on our ship of the Church. Nonsense is made of obedience if the governed be not consulted. We know that to our Protestant and Jewish neighbors, the authority of the Church appears to strut on the leg of power. We ask them to consider history's pages; there they will find the more important and shy leg of responsibility.

Our second view of this book or these six booklets is as follows:

As American Catholics, we hear talk of "dialogue," "symposium," "pluralism," and "Ecumenism." Our categorial imperative is that white be white and black black; there is no respect for courteous but principle-lacking gray. All mankind in certain respects is one man. For this one man, Christ made one Church: the Roman Catholic Church. We admit that, in separating themselves from the Roman Catholic Church, other churches have kept some elements of the Catholic Church which are like stepping-stones to reunion: hierarchy and sacraments; the Bible; a majority of the

articles of faith; principal prayers; and the various liturgies. Hence our view is that nothing positive be renounced but only enlarged, completed, and negations dropped. Within the unity of the Roman Catholic Church we accept the differences of others; we enrich ourselves. Ours is the unity of a family in which all members have a common last name, but in which each individual has a different first name.

As Catholics in the United States of America, we commend separation of Church and State. This, however, does not mean a wall of separation between religion and government. The Church's attitude toward civil authority is not to usurp or to organize but only to animate. American Catholics should be leaven in the dough, salt in the food, and light in the world. As citizens, American Catholics would "restore all things in Christ" by work, art, skills, by political and economic activities. We want what Claudel says: "Thus it is the whole of Creation which is in travail, striving to bring forth a supreme confession to its Creator, and we must somehow serve as its midwives. . . ." As citizens we intend to be "part and parcel" not "over against." But "part and parcel" we SHALL be in a Christian way *with* the Church!

—REV. WILLIAM J. RODGERS  
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Brooklyn, N. Y.

**THE LIFE OF BENEDICT XV,** by Walter H. Peters, Bruce, Milwaukee, 1959, 321 pp., \$4.50

When Cardinals Gibbons, O'Connell, and Begin arrived at Naples in September, 1914, and were told that Giacomo della Chiesa had been elected Pope, Cardinal Gibbons asked, "Who's he?" In spite of six historic years in Peter's chair during tumultuous days of war and revolution throughout most of the world, Benedict XV still seems to evoke the same query, "Who's he?" Father

Philip Hughes has remarked that even Benedict's encyclicals have sunk into what he calls "unintelligent oblivion."

No one answer seems completely adequate to explain history's cruel fate for Benedict, but Walter H. Peters' biography strives admirably to resurrect the man and gain for him some long-due recognition, redefining his role in the modern papacy.

Giacomo della Chiesa sprang from the aristocracy; his mother counted Innocent VII in her family, while the Della Chiesa family ("of the Church") could boast of a time-honored entry in the *Golden Book of the Patrician Families of Genoa*. Giacomo was reared in gentlemanly refinement and steeped in the Italian classics. His naturally analytical mind was honed by studies in law at the University of Genoa. As Father Peters briskly relates Giacomo's young manhood, there emerges a shy, introverted young man bound closely to his mother (she later took an apartment near St. Peter's when he was attached to the Curia in Rome), hesitant about telling his father he wanted to be a priest. When the step was made, the Archbishop of Genoa arranged for Giacomo to attend the Capranica College in Rome and eventually the young Della Chiesa was ordained to the priesthood and awarded the three doctorates of letters, theology, and canon law.

The next twenty-five years were spent in the diplomatic service of the Vatican: four years as secretary to Cardinal Rampolla in Spain (cementing a filial affection that was to endure beyond Rampolla's death in 1913) and twenty years as *sostituto* in the Secretary of State's office. Then came the archbishopric of Bologna, the red hat in 1914, and the surprising election to the papacy in the same year.

Benedict's reign was a paradox. Here was a shy, studious personality catapulted into world prominence, welcoming for the first time in history a president of the United States (Woodrow Wilson on his way to the Peace Conference), treading the mine fields of international diplomacy, while the Allies berated him mercilessly for not condemning German atrocities while ignoring his pleas and plans for peace. Within his official family he was acutely embarrassed by the treason of Monsignor Gerlach, convicted of conspiring to blow up Italian

ships. His friendliness toward the Italian government smoothed the path toward ultimate peace in the Lateran Treaty under Pius XI.

In the meantime Benedict carried on the internal affairs of the Church. His encyclical *Humani Generis* accelerated Scripture study; his *Providentissimus* promulgated the new Code; he canonized SS. Joan of Arc, Margaret Mary, and Gabriel the Passionist. Especially impressive in Father Peters' biography is the glimpse of the man's inner life, his dedication to duty, his disciplined patience in the face of gross misunderstandings and even contempt. Thus the chapter "The Human Benedict" comes off especially well.

Father Peters has done an immense amount of digging for the detailed information that abounds in this study; the copious notes and extensive bibliography testify to his assiduity. One might wish, though, that he had curtailed some of his editorializing and let the facts speak for themselves. He seems to write from a posture of defense and apology with the result that sentimentalism often cloyes his lines. His diction is sometimes less than accurate. For example, on page 241, he writes that Benedict, if he had lived longer, would have been a "menace to Mussolini." The word "menace" has too many unfavorable connotations to be predicated of Pope Benedict in any relationship.

But Father Peters' biography of the "lost pope" provides facts and insights that in the aggregate are nowhere else available in English. His labor will contribute to a more appreciative estimate of Benedict and his pontificate and certainly, after reading his work, a person will be able to answer fully and even spiritedly the historic question, "Who's he?"

—REV. FRANCIS X. CANFIELD  
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**CHRISTIANITY IN ART**, by Frank and Dorothy Getlein, illustrated, Bruce, Milwaukee, 196 pp., \$4.50

Any reader who knows a little about the acknowledged masterpieces of painting will find delight in having his knowledge of the subject refreshed, broadened, and intensified by *Christianity in Art*. This is a handy little nontechnical summary of the stories behind the artists who have given to the world the great and memorable pictorial representations of God's dealings with man. The authors, art critics for the *Milwaukee Journal*, Frank and Dorothy Getlein, have narrowed a somewhat extensive field by attempting to show how the development of Christian art was influenced or determined over the ages by the perennial conflict between Church and State. They rightly regard this continuing struggle as "one of the root problems of historical Christianity."

"The varying situation of the Church in regard to the State," observe the Getleins, "is intimately bound up with the whole development of Christian art, so much so that an understanding of that art is impossible without some grasp of the nature of the problem." To illustrate their interesting thesis, the authors cite the contrast between the typically Byzantine portrayal of Christ and Roualt's modern conception of Him. In the sixth-century Byzantine period, an era and a culture in which the spiritual and secular powers were nearly identified, our Lord is generally depicted in all the regal splendor befitting a king. In our day, when the power of the State is either indifferent or hostile to religion, Georges Roualt portrays Him not as a king, but as the suffering and degraded victim of a king.

It is in the reflected light of this Church-State relationship that Mr. and Mrs. Getlein want us to see the religious frescoes, mosaics, panels, canvases, illuminations, and prints of the masters. The authors are at their best, though,

when they leave aside this forced and only tenuously unifying theme, to hew more closely to their own specialty, art criticism itself. They highlight clearly and readably the fine points of composition, of structure, and of patterns in the better known religious pictures. Even the casual viewer of good paintings will welcome this explanation of how the great artists employ line, color, and mass to achieve balance, unity, and rhythm in their compositions.

*Christianity in Art* contains 68 illustrations in black and white. Only the frontispiece, "He Thirsts," a modern by André Girard, is reproduced in full color. Although the halftone reproductions are small and often unclear, they do serve to render more intelligible each of the authors' detailed analyses and critical evaluations. The fortunate reader will be the one who has on hand for easy reference an occasional pertinent print in color and of more generous dimensions. Most of the great names in religious art are here represented. Every reader is bound to find one or more of his own favorites.

"By universal agreement, the two centuries, from 1400 to 1600, constitute a golden age in man's artistic life." That is how Frank and Dorothy Getlein introduce their enlightening study of the Renaissance, which came to be in the Italian cities of Siena, Florence, Rome, and Venice. The chapters dealing with this period are the authors' finest. They do here a real service in dissipating the anti-Renaissance feeling common among Catholics. This mistaken attitude, they point out, comes as a reaction to the exaggerated secularizing interpretation of those centuries, so often made by later scholars inimical to the Church. Raphael, Michelangelo, and Leonardo da Vinci are the giants of these years, and they receive from the Getleins the



rave evaluations, commensurate with their traditional stature.

Limitations of space no doubt made necessary a big leap in the Getleins' history—from Rembrandt, "the only great formally religious artist produced by Protestantism," to art in our times. Only ten pages are devoted to this latter phase of Christian art, at best a skimpy treatment of a vital and heatedly controversial era of religious painting.

Since the Christianity mentioned in the title and the text is Catholicism, it is of interest to note that *Christianity in Art* carries no "Imprimatur." By way of background material, there is in it

much elucidation of Catholic dogma, presented for the most part with understanding and reverence. There are times too when Mr. and Mrs. Getlein wax petulant and chide the Church for tolerating, even abetting, the tawdry and the banal in church art. They attribute to paintings like Murillo's familiar "Immaculate Conception" the "saccharinization of Christianity." But the two authors are one in foreseeing "a new Catholicism, a church which once more, like Goya, will live in the present."

—REV. JOSEPH G. MCGROARTY  
St. Peter Claver Church  
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**SPIRITUAL JOURNAL** of St. Ignatius Loyola, translated by William J. Young, S.J., Woodstock, Md., Woodstock College Press, 1959, pp. 68 plus index, i-x, \$1.10 (paper)

The extant fragments of St. Ignatius' personal journal, extending through one year of the saint's life, have never before been published in English. They are a valuable item of ascetical and hagiographical literature, but more on that in a moment. First a word on two possible causes of puzzlement to the general reader. During a great part of the year covered by this journal, St. Ignatius was trying to decide what kind of religious poverty to incorporate in the Constitutions of the new Jesuit Order, and this effort is very conspicuously reflected in his journal which is the record of his experiences in prayer during this time. It will come as a surprise to some to learn that the residences and churches of the Jesuits are supposed to exist without any fixed income, although the colleges may have such income. Nowadays many Jesuit churches in many parts of the world are *parish* churches, which necessarily have revenues to pursue their proper works, and so the Jesuits find it hard to maintain a good number of what the Church Law calls *religious* churches, which are not parochial and in the case of the Jesuits

would be without fixed revenue. The status of such churches was what was occupying the mind of Ignatius during his prayers.

Again, there is a great deal about tears and weeping in the saint's journal. And it may be well to point out that psychiatrists occasionally speak with disfavor of the reputed Anglo-Saxon prejudice against tears. There may be complexes of spiritual and emotional experience in which tears are the natural concomitant even for the personalities of responsible men. And if there be question of religious experience which is due to special intervention and condescension on the part of God, then it and the accompanying tears should be considered, and are, a great gift from God.

Gordon Allport, in a little book on the growth of personality entitled *Being*, said that you have reached the real person when you encounter a man's ideals and goals. It is surely also true to say that you reach the real man when you are privileged to observe him at his prayers. His own candid record of his prayers shows that St. Ignatius was strongly oriented, with all his conscious



faculties, toward the Blessed Trinity, toward Jesus in the Blessed Trinity, and toward Jesus and His salutary action in the Mass. Past master though he was in the art of mental prayer, he leaned heavily also on the best vocal prayers—he often, for instance, said the votive Mass of the Blessed Trinity, whose opening words in the Introit, "Blessed be the Holy Trinity," met him with a familiarity which was a great consolation to him. Having been graced by God with a strong awareness of and love for the Blessed Trinity, he was also strongly alive to the intimate relation which binds all creatures to the Trinity. He lived his own formula: God in all creatures and all of them in Him. All this was in the consciousness of Ignatius, in his spiritual life—prompting us to reflect on how great a grace it is for a good religious life to understand practically the truths of faith.

The result for Ignatius was a serene sense of the richness with which God surrounded him and visited him, with consequent characteristic sentiments of worship and oblation, of gratitude, of humility and of abandonment to God's designs. Thus he wrote, in the entry for March 30, 1544, "In this interval of time, I thought that humility, reverence and respect should not be fearful but loving, and this was so firmly established in my mind that I said confidently: 'Give me a loving humility, and thus reverence and respect,' receiving fresh consolations in these words."

His experiences in prayer were confirmatory of his prudent conclusions from his past experience generally. He became familiar with the natural as well as the supernatural dynamics of his own mind and heart, what to foster and what to beware of. His prayer-experience issued naturally in a confidence which showed itself in turn in the dispatch with which he could make decisions and handle his affairs. All this appears in the journal and it is a delight to watch it. This

reviewer is reminded of the words of Father James Lainez, Ignatius' first successor as General of the Society: "Of Father Master Ignatius I have noticed a number of things, such as a great understanding and a great feeling for whatever pertains to God, the more so according as it pertains to God more purely and closely, and then great wisdom and prudence in practical things, and the gift of discernment of spirits, and great fortitude and magnanimity in trials, great simplicity in not judging anyone and in interpreting everything for the best, and a great way of employing and occupying himself and others in the service of God."

Coming now to the matter of the translation, this reviewer suggests that "I was struck and withdrawn from such intense devotion, although I wanted to repel the thought" (p. 9) should read quite differently, with the adversative conjunction changed to "and" or "because." Again, "with this intention of impressing on my mind the name of Jesus" (p. 16) should read as "with this intensification with which the name of Jesus was impressed." Also, "to be just as content as when I was not visited" (p. 40) should have a quite different sense as "to be just as content when I was not visited." Perhaps the Spanish word for "prayers" should not be translated as "meditations," much less as "orations." This reviewer would prefer not to see the important word "visitations" changed to "consolations." It was a hard choice whether the condensed idiom of a private journal, with the constant use of gerunds, should be translated more, or less, literally. Translating it less literally might seem to be heavy-handed meddling. Father Young apparently chose to translate pretty literally, and this may be the factor which will prevent the book from being digestible far for the many readers it deserves to have.

— DANIEL A. CHARLTON, S.J.

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**RETREAT NOTES FOR RELIGIOUS**, by Edward Leen, C.S.Sp., ed. by Reginald F. Walker, C.S.Sp., P. J. Kenedy and Sons, New York, 1959

*Retreat Notes for Religious* comes from a transcript of notes made during the last long retreat that Father Leen gave just a few months before his death in 1944. The editing was confined to efforts to establish continuity in the conferences and to make them acceptable to a larger reading public. For his success in doing just those two things, the editor is to be acknowledged.

In *Retreat Notes* the reader discovers a skill of Father Leen's, the benefits of which had hitherto been restricted to the limited audience of a particular religious group—his ability as a retreat master. Missing from the conferences are his polished style, the easy flow of language, the leisurely departures into finer analyses that so characterize his other writings. But in their stead we find the necessary and much more conversational style of a retreat master at home with his retreatants. We find a theme established early in the retreat and followed; we find instruction neatly presented and stripped of rhetorical device. Even as direct and as terse as is his style, however, it is easy to sense when Father Leen progresses in the retreat to the point that he loves best. It is in the conferences where the emphasis shifts from setting the foundation to a study of Christ. Then he speaks most easily on living in Christ by faith, of studying the humility of Christ, of understanding and accepting the cross of Christ.

Father Leen's appeal to his retreatants is to live what is truly real with a poverty of spirit that is willing to make a judgment on one's self. "I must be ready to face the consequences of that glance of Christ into my soul. . . . Things are real in the exact measure that they stand in their proper relation to God," he said. With a commendable

knowledge of religious women, he warned his retreatants against formalism: "The emphasis should not be on the shape of your habit but on the shape of your soul. It should not be on what you do but on what you are. Since life is made up of a multitude of observances, there is a tendency to shift the emphasis from the essential to the accidental."

The greater part of the retreat is given to a study of "putting on Christ the Lord." Over and over again there is his insistence, so familiar in all of his writings, that the circumstances of daily life must be accepted and used. "His [Christ's] dealings with life are a series of object lessons showing us how we are to deal with the circumstances that arise in our own lives. . . . The first difficulty that arises—we rebel, we criticize, we protest; we do exactly what Christ did not do. The Holy Ghost tries to use the circumstances to trace Our Lord's image in us and we shift away."

The book is a thoughtful offering on the part of Father Leen's brother religious, Father Walker. It is worthwhile for meditative reading, not for the sentimental reason of keeping his memory alive. It is not the presence of this man of God we would wish to have with us. Rather, it is the power of his instruction, his reasonableness, his clear vision of the real which he so successfully communicates to others. We may add *Retreat Notes for Religious* to Father Leen's other treasures of spiritual writing, as *In the Likeness of Christ, The True Vine and Its Branches, Progress Through Mental Prayer*. These and all his works have established him as a familiar, popular, and sound spiritual writer.

—SISTER MARY FANCHON, C.S.J.

Regis College  
Weston, Mass.

**THE JESUITS: A Self-Portrait**, by Peter Lippert, S.J., translated by John Murray, S.J.; Herder & Herder, New York, 1958, 131 pp., \$2.25

The author of this little book makes a nice distinction whose applicability is surely not limited to the Jesuits. On the one hand, there is the written "Institute," principally the Constitutions. These are ideal and unchanging in all essentials. On the other, there is the live spirit of the Order, which may vary at least to some degree with time and place. This live spirit itself, as well as the written formulae, is amenable to investigation and analysis by the thoughtful observer, and is the appropriate guide for the interpretation of the written formulae. The visible is the sign-nature of the invisible, and the rule itself is best interpreted in the light of what may be independently known of the spirit (pp. 25, 26).

The Jesuits, as good Catholics, try to open their minds and hearts to the personal Christ, who is the heart of the Mystical Christ, and their life of prayer is supposed to keep alive in them the awareness of, and the worship of, Christ (p. 28 ff.). The Jesuit prayer methods, especially "meditation" with its regularized use of memory, mind, and will, are to stand the praying Jesuit in good stead, in season and out, when, with the ebb and flow of spiritual tone in him, a little "pump-priming" becomes desirable (p. 15).

Speaking of the prayer of the Jesuit, the author's reference to visits to the Blessed Sacrament is a good instance of the fact that much that is described as Jesuit is neither *de jure* nor *de facto* any monopoly of theirs (p. 29). Perhaps the author, in his enthusiasm for some personal idea of his about low-voltage, casual prayer, betrays a certain lack of appreciation for the "sweetnesses of unitive prayer" wherein men "retreat into solitude" (pp. 14, 17). Speaking of the Jesuit's prayer, he says, "There is nothing ecstatic or visionary about it.

It is far removed from the state of higher mysticism. It involves no extinction or silencing of the soul's powers and activities but much rather their lively application and intense use" (pp. 30, 31). Is the author here hitting at, striking at, something he may not fully understand or appreciate? At any rate, it may not be unfair to suggest that he is better in his positive than in his negative impressions. Aren't we all!

The author puts us very much in his debt with his fine exposition of the great dual rhythm of the Pauline Epistles, which is *ipso facto* the legitimate hallmark and patrimony of the Catholic, and therefore also of the Jesuit: "first, the gratitude of the man who has been redeemed as he kneels or lies prostrate in the dust, and then the blend of joy and pride and enthusiasm in the apostle's energetic determination to co-operate" (p. 36 ff.). No wonder the Jesuit, when he is true to his vocation, shies away from the comfortably bourgeois life (p. 17) and even from what a sincere religious writer has recently praised as the "unashamedly mixed" life.

A religious order is a fraternity of like-minded, like-inspired individuals. The double motivating mystery of self-effacement and confession of debt, and of dedicated attachment to the purposes of Christ, is caught up and preserved by the group, becomes the source of unity for the group and the inspiration of the group. Corporately as well as individually, the Jesuits, as all religious, declare their nothingness in their vow of poverty, their wish to love and to give in their vow of chastity, and their holding tight to the lifeline of authenticity and power from God in the vow of obedience (p. 44 ff.).

Father Lippert writes well of the activity of the Jesuits as it appears on the surface: a tenacious fragmentation



and building by parts, careful adaptation of varied job assignments to varied personalities, subordination of the individual performer (with the proper amount of freedom allowed him for optimum performance) to the weighted claims of the enterprise generally considered. Reference is made, to be sure, to the ideal and motive of action in concert with Christ (this was the lesson of St. Ignatius' vision at La Storta). But one may remark, without complaint or censure, that there is no mention of what modern scholars have found implied in the writings of the Saint and of his official interpreter to the brethren, Father Nadal, namely, an ideal of contemplative action which, in a common focus, contemplates and serves the Blessed Trinity present in all persons (this was arguably the lesson of St. Ignatius' vision at the River Cardoner). At any rate, action is important, as all agree, and the author interestingly and acutely finds a connection between this and the Jesuits' interest in casuistry (p. 60 ff.)!

Ancient Aristotle already knew the importance of action as the most important factor in dramatic composition and in life itself. But it took Dante in the *Purgatorio* to point out the importance of love as the motive of action and as the hidden substance of all life and all living. This is surely in accord with what Father Lippert rightly puts as the Jesuits' special feeling for training the will and its choices. The mobility of their own apostolic enterprise, the

variety of devices pointed toward shaping the performance of the will, e.g., the Three Modes of Humility, all show a special and, in the light of previous remarks, an understandable sympathy for good, strong, shapely choices of the loving will (p. 69 ff). And the role of the superiors, here nicely delineated, is to use authority to preserve the unity and shape of the joint enterprise of so many freely operating agents, and to do so in an intimate rather than a legalistic way (p. 79 ff.).

Father Lippert has good things to say about the long years of training of the young Jesuit. It is a molding by the combined influence of rule, mentor, and the life itself, and one result of it ought to be, as the years go by, a veritable pulverizing of at least some defects and of various positive and negative aspects of immaturity, along with an ever more secure attachment to Christ (p. 96 ff.). This long training was exemplified in the formative years which brought the Basque Ignatius, already endowed with the special virtues of his people, to a highly wrought spiritual stature which, as even this little review may have conveyed, is universal in its humanism and Christianity (p. 106 ff.).

The book concludes with the author's suggestion that the Jesuits' spirituality of action may be peculiarly appropriate for dealing with the contemporary *zeitgeist*.

— DANIEL J. CHARLTON, S.J.  
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**EDITH STEIN, Thoughts on Her Life and Times, by Henry Bordeaux, translated by Donald and Idella Gallagher, Bruce, Milwaukee, 87 pp., \$3.50**

This book, by a distinguished member of the French Academy, presents the author's meditations on the life of the Carmelite Jewess, Edith Stein, especially in relation to her times. Henry Bordeaux looks out on the Christian and non-

Christian world, considers Germany and this age, and sees the significant role that Edith Stein plays in modern history. As St. Therese of the Child Jesus, by the purity and holiness of her life, rises over a suffering France which



aspires to peace and unity, so, the author believes that Edith Stein (Sister Teresa Benedicta of the Cross), destroyed by the Nazis, should rise over her nation which seeks regeneration and the expiation of the pride and evil of Hitlerism. "The German people and educated people everywhere," he writes, "look upon Edith Stein as one of the greatest and most remarkable figures of this century. They see in her a religious phenomenon of extraordinary significance, a witness of the spirit of the highest order." As a background for his theme, he draws into his study of Edith Stein many other persons, mostly her contemporaries, who could be linked with her in one spirit or who stand in dark contrast to her high ideal.

After a brief survey of her early life, her brilliant philosophical studies, her conversion from Judaism, her entrance into Carmel, and her death in a gas chamber at Auschwitz, he treats of the outstanding traits of Edith Stein's life: humility in the face of her great intellectual endowments; love of her family and race which became a universal love; and a deep devotion to the cross of Christ. These are the traits which prepare her victimhood and which shape her destiny.

Henry Bordeaux became interested in Edith Stein because of her Carmelite vocation; he has a deep attachment to, and a long acquaintance with, Carmel, his uncle having been prior of monasteries on Mount Carmel and in Paris. He sees in Edith Stein's Carmelite vocation the perfect flowering of her life; she becomes a true daughter of St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the

Cross, and pages are devoted to their doctrine which she so truly lived. Tribute is paid to her gift of prayer, her love of silence, her total dedication of self, and her loving acceptance of the cross. Her suffering became a spiritual agony for her people and for all who do not know the redeeming Christ. A witness who escaped punishment said of her after her arrest that she guessed her fate and went forward to it with silence and a calm dignity, with compassionate charity for her co-sufferers; but she gave indication of an immense sorrow, like "the Virgin of Sorrows, a Pietà without the Christ." Yet, as the author affirms, the Christ was truly there. It is a pity that the book does not have a frontispiece, since the saintly beauty and the tragedy of her face reveal more than words.

Certainly the life of Edith Stein has a deep meaning, a sense of destiny and of a chosen place in the plan of God. She herself said (though the book does not quote it): "I have an ever deeper and firmer belief that nothing is merely an accident when seen in the light of God, that my whole life to its smallest details has been marked out for me in the plan of Divine Providence and has a completely coherent meaning in God's all-seeing Eyes. And so I am beginning to rejoice in the light of glory wherein this meaning will be unveiled to me."

With the author and with all admirers of Edith Stein, we pray that her glory may soon be revealed to the world.

— A DISCALCED CARMELITE NUN  
Carmelite Monastery  
Pewaukee, Wis.

**BOLD ENCOUNTER**, by Peter-Thomas Rohrbach, O.C.D., Bruce, Milwaukee, 1960, 224 pp., \$3.75

In his latest work Father Rohrbach, author of a previous novel on parish life entitled *A Gentle Fury*, presents a fictional biography of St. John of the Cross

whose mystical writings have somewhat overshadowed the personal aspects of his own unusually holy life. Living in the turbulent times of sixteenth-century

Spain, Juan de Yepes encountered an assortment of unusual personalities, especially those living in Carmelite monasteries and convents. Some were saints like Teresa of Jesus, with whom he played a decisive role in reforming the Order; some were mediocre religious who could stand reform; and some like Nicholas Doria lost sight of Father John's reformation within the Order and made the Reform their catapult to tyrannic power and the cause for final separation from the Carmelites of the Ancient Observance. In a very readable and facile style Father Rohrbach brings home the meaning of his title by showing in this novel that the personalities St. John of the Cross had to meet demanded a *bold encounter*. And on the whole the novelist is admirably faithful to his task of writing this fictionalized version of this Saint's life. Drawing on the authentic biography by Father Bruno, O.C.D., Father Rohrbach presents usually an accurate historical context for his protagonist. Yet the author's interpretation of certain incidents in his story jars the reader with its lack of verisimilitude.

Even an historical novelist must make his story and characters plausible, must so use facts, recognized by his readers as proved, without distorting them, and must resolve the conflicts in which his characters engage. If history has solved a riddle, the novelist is not free to disregard the solution of a riddle evoked by his novel. Otherwise he risks losing one of the necessary ingredients of all literary art: truth. In one particular incident Father Rohrbach relates the apparently unjustified punishment of the Reform friars by those of the Observance and allows the reason to remain a riddle. Yet, another Discalced Carmelite in 1911 found the solution to the riddle of "the persecution of the Discalced Friars by their Calced Brethren": Father Benedict Zimmerman, O.C.D., found the document of General Rubeo that explicitly

forbade the Reform to attempt a separatist movement, and in the event of such a happening, Rubeo pronounced the severest penalties on the members of the Reform. Since the Reform friars like John of the Cross were still under the jurisdiction of General Rubeo, the latter could justly punish any friar living in a monastery whose establishment lacked his approval. This documentary solution to one of the riddles that Father Rohrbach presents in his novel seems to have been overlooked; hence the puzzle is unsolved, the reader is dissatisfied, and the story loses some of its force.

Despite such an unfortunate interpretation, and the slight inaccuracy of Father Anthony's visit to the dying Saint at "Duruelo" instead of at Ubeda (p. 213), Father Rohrbach has achieved his ambition of showing John of the Cross as particularly human and emphatically a saint. Both humanism and sanctity are revealed in the protagonist's approach to the various persons he meets in his *bold encounter*. In particular this is seen in St. John's conduct with a certain Helena Cortez, a rich widow who has designs on the Saint. Instead of coming to this confessor for spiritual direction, one day she came to seduce the Saint. But instead of using a hot poker to chase away the sinful woman, John calmly explained why her proposal was as ludicrous as it was sinful. With such tactics he converted the woman and restored her to grace and dignity instead of alienating her. Such episodes as this are used effectively by the author to demonstrate the sympathy and sanctity of John.

John of the Cross' suffering, both at Toledo under the Observance and at Ubeda under the Reform jurisdiction, is brought out by the author in a telling fashion. With the resignation of a saint the protagonist accepts his sufferings as permitted by God. If there is to be any retribution, Divine Providence must mete it out. Until his death on December 14,

1591, the Saint suffered without complaint. His life was indeed a *bold encounter* that demanded the heroism of a saint. And this is the plot of Father Rohrbach's novel, as it must be the major theme of any biography on St.

John of the Cross, Carmelite, Mystic, and Doctor of the Church.

— NEAL McNANNA, O.CARM.  
Whitefriars Hall  
Washington, D. C.

**CHRIST IN THE THEOLOGY OF ST. PAUL**, by L. Cerfaux, Herder & Herder, New York, 560 pp., \$7.80

The principal factors of Paul's Christology, which he inherited from the first Christian community, remain constant throughout the Epistles, and thus we cannot speak of a true *evolution* in his system. However, we can distinguish three successive levels in his development, all clearly gravitating around a different center of interest.

The first level moves about Christ's second coming and resurrection. The second coming is our future salvation and the signal of our resurrection. Christ's Resurrection is connected with the second coming as its first act or prelude. However, the resurrection also makes the sanctifying power of the future life and its demands present in this world. Salvation then is not something that is awaited; it is already with us.

Christ's kingdom likewise is conceived not only as a future reality, to be established at the second coming, but also as already with us here and now. This is why Paul's theology of Christ's redeeming death underlines the present power of that death.

Paul's emphasis on the Resurrection overshadows his treatment of the Incarnation. Christ's sanctifying power begins with the Resurrection, and the whole purpose of the Incarnation is to bring "Christ according to the flesh" into this world so that he may thereby be in a position to die and so accomplish the work of our salvation in His mortal body.

The second level of Paul's development gravitates around God's power and

generosity present in Christ. Paul presents the Christian message as opposed to the fundamental ideas of Judaism and paganism. It is opposed to Judaism because Christ put an end to the system of the Law. We belong to a new system in which Christ is the originator of our justice, through the faith that we have in Him. It is opposed to the pagan philosophical religions, such as Orphism and the mystery cults, because Christianity is the acceptance of Christ's power, which is the wisdom of God, given to us by the Spirit.

Christian salvation deepens into a new life, which comes to us through the power of Christ's Resurrection. Christ is, now, the "spiritual" Christ, communicating His own life of holiness to us. The exact relationship between the spiritual Christ and the Holy Spirit requires careful analysis.

Our life is also a share in Christ's risen life. The "collective" Christ, the second Adam, and the Church as Christ's Body are all themes that Paul presents, but the idea that is fundamental to these themes is the Christian's union with the individual risen Christ. Paul's construction is not based on a gnostic plan or on the exaggerated Anthropos myth.

The third level of Paul's development gravitates around the idea of Christ's "mystery." The manner in which God has brought about our salvation reveals a secret wisdom centered on Christ, hidden in eternity but realized in time. To express the content of the mystery we have to define Christ's connection with the world. Christ unifies the world



of men (both Jews and pagans) and the world of cosmic forces. He gathers everything into the unity of their origin, allowing us to penetrate into the mystery of Christ's Person as the image of God. A precise explanation of such titles as "Son of God," "Lord," and "Christ" throws further light on Paul's concept of the Person of Christ.

These are merely the conclusions (extremely condensed at that) that Msgr. Cerfaux makes in his *Christ in the Theology of St. Paul*. The book itself is a careful exegesis of the text of the Epistles. The reasoning at times tends almost to tedium; but there is a wealth

of insights that cannot help but give the reader a profound understanding of St. Paul, and one based on the best of modern scholarship. However, it is a book that must be studied rather than read. Since no formal theological training is required, it can be recommended to the layman who is a serious student of Scripture. The experience will be most rewarding. Some of the more difficult exegesis could be skipped and the well-summarized conclusions would still be intelligible.

— PAUL B. STEINMETZ, S.J.  
St. Mary's College  
St. Marys, Kans.

### IDEALS TO LIVE BY: A Guide to the Spiritual Exercise of St. Ignatius Loyola, by Robert Nash, S.J., Benziger Brothers, Inc., New York, 1959, 179 pp., \$3.75

These pages reflect the thoughts of twenty years of retreat-giving to priests, religious, and laity. They contain a popularization of the very compact book of the *Spiritual Exercises*. Father Nash has written in his usual easy-to-read style, full of appropriate examples. Along with the key meditations, chapters on the general directions for making a retreat, the particular examen, and Ignatian methods of prayer are included. The psychological ordering of the various meditations, from which the *Exercises* derive their unique effectiveness, is preserved.

Father Nash puts the election, i.e., some particular choice in the service of God, at the very center of the *Exercises* where it belongs. Everything before prepares for it: the logic of using creatures correctly in the First Principle and Foundation, the staggering effects of sin in frustrating this plan, the call of Christ

in the Kingdom to re-establish right order, the choice between the campaign plan of Christ or Satan in the Two Standards, and finally the best possible dispositions for making a good election in the Three Classes of Men and the Third Mode of Humility. After the election has been made, the sufferings of the Passion and the joys of the Resurrection are intended to further strengthen the motivation required to carry out one's election. The conclusion is the meditation On Obtaining Divine Love in which we learn to find God in all creatures.

This book can be recommended especially to laymen who wish to exercise themselves spiritually through meditative reading. It will help us refreshen those great ideals by which we must live if we are to be true followers of Christ.

— PAUL B. STEINMETZ, S.J.

### THE FAMILY MAN, by Eugene Geissler, Fides, 1960, 170 pp., \$3.50

Eugene Geissler has the knack for exploiting the pathos in the little, homely incidents that happen everyday. Par-

ticularly enjoyable is his treatment of the ventures of *The Family Man* (obviously himself — no one could speak



so sincerely about a fictional character; or search with such insight into any soul but his own).

The hero's ventures are conspicuously lacking in visible success. He has the feeling—familiar to all laymen—that his work is fruitless and a waste of time. Then toward the end of each experience he lets shine a ray of hope. The struggle is not in vain. As long as man uses Christ as his image, his work cannot but be a success.

His concept of the structure of the Mystical Body involves an extra dimension not usually found: individual, family, *neighborhood*, parish, etc. This

emphasis on neighborhood is particularly desirable in big city parishes, where much good can be accomplished in the area between family and parish.

The average layman will enjoy the "Impressions" of the book more than the "Reflections." Both are true—both are to the point; but the former is pleasant reading, whereas the latter draws the conclusions and points a way of action which is not always easy. I wish Mr. Geissler lived in my neighborhood.

—E. M. READ, JR.  
Longview, Wash.

### AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF ASCETICAL AND MYSTICAL THEOLOGY, by Archbishop Goodier, Bruce, Milwaukee, 1957 (new printing), 209 pp., \$3.50

Whenever recommending spiritual reading one would do well to keep Archbishop Goodier's books near the top of the list. His profound knowledge of theology, his deep acquaintance with the life of Christ, his discerning spirit—all these things qualify him as a real expert in matters spiritual. Add to these qualifications a sure and masterful control of the English language and you have a truly accomplished spiritual writer. All of this is evident in the book under consideration here (though perhaps not quite so evident as it is in his other spiritual writing) since this is a textbook, and at least to this reviewer's prejudiced mind, there is always something musty about a textbook—or at least the suspicion thereof.

This is an excellent study of the spiritual life, particularly recommended for beginners or for those seeking a sum-

mary of the principles of the spiritual life. Here everything is clear and concise, but nothing is presented in a truncated manner, as is the case in some books of this type. The author makes his book more palatable by avoiding the obvious textbook methods of constant divisions and subdivisions, of frequent interruptions of the narrative flow. Instead he presents us with a smooth and lucid exposition of the full meaning of the spiritual life.

This book is the ready answer for anyone seeking an account of the spiritual life that is readily intelligible, orderly, digestible, and free of the academic stiffness that marks some of the other books in this field.

—P. M. McNAMARA, O.S.M.  
Servite Fathers Novitiate  
Milwaukee, Wis.

### THE PRESENCE OF GOD, by Jean Daniélou, S.J., Helicon Press, Baltimore, 60 pp., \$1.95

Without being platitudinous one can safely say that what the world really

needs today is more meditation. This book fills that need in splendid fashion.

In sixty pages of closely reasoned, luminous prose, Father Daniélou spins out what amounts to a meditation on the varying degrees of the presence of God. The key concept here is that of the Temple. With that as a point of reference, the author considers Almighty God as manifesting His presence first of all in the Temple of creation. Here Father Daniélou exhibits real poetic power as he describes the innocence, the sacramental character of creation.

Then in orderly succession the author presents us with a consideration of: the Jewish Temple in the Old Testament, the Temple that is Christ, then the

Temple of the Church, and finally the heavenly Temple.

There is a kind of quiet crescendo here as the author skillfully leads us from the concept of the Temple in the broadest sense to the most complete realization of the idea of Temple—the absolute and glorious possession of God in heaven.

Even though this book is slight in size, it is not something to be treated lightly. It is indeed a truly significant book, the product of a keen mind and a meditative spirit. Reading it carefully and prayerfully cannot fail to enrich one's life.

—P. M. McNAMARA, O.S.M.

**SAINT PAUL: Apostle of Nations, by Daniel-Rops; translated by Jex Martin; Fides, Chicago, 1953, 163 pp., \$2.75**

Many of us have wished for a more comprehensive grasp of the Epistles of St. Paul, those treasure houses of Christian doctrine. In a book of 163 pages Henri Daniel-Rops, the eminent French historian, has given the essential contents and the circumstances in which they were written. The book is no *Paul of Tarsus* (Holzner); yet in its fast-moving, popular style, it is both beautiful and enlightening.

While it is true that the Acts is in part a biography of the great saint, it is also true that much biographical material can be gleaned from the Epistles. Using both sources, the author has succeeded in weaving an almost complete life. In fact, he emphasizes the truth that the New Testament is the biography of two persons, one of them St. Paul.

Daniel-Rops acknowledges that he has relied on the researches of biblical scholars for his synthesis, but in this area there are bound to be differences of opinion. For example, he calls St. Paul's speech to the Athenians, the "unknown God" speech, an "obvious de-

feat" (p. 95), and he seems to equate the mysterious gift of tongues on Pentecost with a gift of hearing in the listeners (p. 105). There are, too, a few discrepancies in dates.

In his last paragraphs Daniel-Rops gives his own reasons for a return to St. Paul in these our days: against the feeling of helpless negation and absurdity of the Apostles, St. Paul proposes the unshakable certainty of an ultimate meaning of life; against the universal oblivion into which the world is plunging, St. Paul sets the reality of a Presence infinitely merciful; against almost universal despair he holds out the promise of glory; against universal hatred and violence he offers the omnipotence of Love.

Daniel-Rops thinks that St. Paul is unquestionably the most shining example of the ardent flame which Christ can light in the souls of those who love Him.

—SISTER MARIA ASSUNTA, C.S.C.  
Saint Mary's College  
Notre Dame, Ind.



**MARRIAGE IS HOLY**, edited by H. Cafforel, translated by Bernard G. Murchland, C.S.C.; synopsis and discussion of questions; Fides Publishers Association, 219 pp., paper, \$1.65

*Marriage Is Holy* is a series of essays by writers who are spokesmen for a group of Catholic families who have been pooling common theories, experiences, and conclusions under the supervision of a competent chaplain.

There are three divisions to the text treating the emotional, physical, and spiritual aspects of married love. In the first part, the froth of sentimental illusion is stripped away to reveal the splendor of human love.

In the second, the differences between men and women are clarified, stressing the fact that neither superiority nor inferiority are implied, but rather the incompleteness of each is realized through mating. It is emphasized that the sexes should not be competitive but each should inspire the other to greater achievement. In discussing fruition, dif-

ferent shades, ranging from strict family limitation to an extreme childlike trust in God's providence regarding offspring, are treated thoroughly. That the grimness is lightened by a sense of humor does not belittle the seriousness of the situation.

Finally, marriage is considered as a sacrament, a vocation, and a mystery. Here we have Christian practicability—high idealism with both feet planted firmly on the ground.

Honesty and sincerity are sensed on every page. If, for any reason, a family should find itself forced to limit its library to three books, I'd recommend the Bible, a good cookbook, and *Marriage Is Holy*.

— CORA MURRAH  
Rock Island, Ill.

**A MEMOIR OF MY SISTER ST. THÉRÈSE**, by Sister Geneviève of the Holy Face (Céline Martin), authorized translation by The Carmelite Sisters of New York of *Conseils et Souvenirs*; P. J. Kenedy & Sons, New York, 1959, 268 pp., \$3.50; M. H. Gill & Son, Ltd., Dublin, 249 pp., \$2.50

Every saint writes an autobiography, though not always in the printed word. It is fundamentally there in a succession of actions and reactions which leave their own record. Undoubtedly, the truest picture of St. Thérèse of Lisieux is to be found in what she herself wrote. However, her own words have been interpreted in an almost bewildering variety of ways, and not every commentator has had the wisdom to comprehend her deep simplicity.

To get to the heart of her doctrine, it is valuable as well as enormously interesting to study it through the eyes of her own sister, who was once the Saint's novice—Soeur Geneviève de la Sainte Face. In the closing years of her

life in Carmel, Sister Geneviève published *Conseils et Souvenirs*, in which are factually recorded the precious memories of St. Thérèse's teachings. This book now comes to us in an excellent translation by the Discalced Carmelite Nuns of New York City, under the title, *A Memoir of My Sister St. Thérèse*. It contains the personal notes which Sister Geneviève wrote in obedience to the prioress while St. Thérèse was alive, besides other reminiscences and also dispositions from the canonical process.

The reader of this book has a warm and unique experience in being drawn into the intimacy of the family circle at the Carmel of Lisieux and in sharing the spiritual guidance which St. Thérèse

gave to the young novices entrusted to her. Here are countless new and illuminating examples of the Little Way of Spiritual Childhood, which remains as practical and appealing as ever, a program for today, both inside and outside the cloister.

The edition published by M. H. Gill and Son Limited, of Dublin, has the added attraction of containing numerous unique photographs that were taken during the Saint's lifetime.

—FRANCESCA VAN DER KLEY  
Jacksonville, Fla.

**WOMEN, WORDS, AND WISDOM, by Solange Hertz, Newman, Westminster, Md., 1959, 184 pp., \$3.50**

There can be no doubt that Solange Hertz is an active, practicing housewife. She is also an essayist who writes with charm and wit of the homely tasks and objects which surround her. Her meditations on a dust pan or thoughts on washing windows are directed to other housewives.

Mrs. Hertz became a Catholic as an adult. She had already changed thousands of diapers before she began the study of theology. That she awakened to concepts such as immanent being or essence and existence as a housewife is a boon to those who will read her book. Very likely their theological knowledge is filed away in college notebooks, used only for "company occasion" discussion. Mrs. Hertz discovered illustrations of new-found truths in the routine life she shares with most women. This is not to say that philosophical background is necessary to understand these essays. For instance, any housewife is aware of a constant battle against dirt. The wisdom of looking on this battle as a symbolic struggle against sin is the author's gift to the simplest.

The reader should be inspired by Mrs. Hertz's wide reading of Scripture, the

Church Fathers, and spiritual writers. One finds quotations from St. Basil, St. John Chrysostom, Fenelon, St. Teresa, Cardinal Newman, and countless others. Perhaps the finest chapter in the book is a discussion of the Epistle for the Housewives' Mass which begins, "Who shall find a valiant woman?" (Prov. 31:10-31.) As the author says, "No housewife serious about her own perfection can afford not to study it." Later, she compares reading Scripture with peeling an onion. "After stripping off the surface meaning, there's always a succession of deeper meanings underneath." The messages she has uncovered in this passage would give most women meditation material for weeks.

"And she shall laugh in the latter day," is a verse in the Housewives' Epistle mentioned above. Mrs. Hertz knows humor is the secret and she uses it liberally. Her nomination of St. Isaac Jogues as the patron saint of egghead housewives (who do their best thinking surrounded by wild Indians) is an example. Not a page lacks the light touch and penetrating maternal eye.

—CATHERINE JENSEN  
Washington, D. C.



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